



DEVELOPING GENDER-SPECIFIC CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections
320 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20534

Morris L. Thigpen
Director

Larry Solomon
Deputy Director

Susan M. Hunter
Chief, Prisons Division

Maureen Buell
Project Manager

National Institute of Corrections
World Wide Web Site
<http://www.nicic.org>

Developing Gender-Specific Classification Systems for Women Offenders

Patricia L. Hardyman, Ph.D.

The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections

The George Washington University

Patricia Van Voorhis, Ph.D.

Center for Criminal Justice Research

University of Cincinnati

February 2004

NIC Accession Number 018931

The research for this report was funded by the National Institute of Corrections under cooperative agreements numbers 99P10IGL2, 00P12GIN1, and 2002D1-0002. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or participating state correctional agencies.

Acknowledgments

The Center for Criminal Justice Research (CCJR) and The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections (ICJC) acknowledge the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) for its leadership in the improvement of objective classification systems for women offenders. In particular, we want to acknowledge and thank our program manager, Sammie D. Brown, formerly with NIC and now back home in South Carolina, for her commitment to these efforts. She has been a strong and persistent advocate of objective prison classification and NIC's technical assistance program. We also would like to acknowledge Mary Whitaker for her encouragement and support for this document.

Special recognition and thanks are due to our research associates at CCJR and ICJC for their diligence and attention to the tasks as we worked with the states. The states' classification steering committee members' commitment to change was critical to our ability to learn and explore the issues. Their dedication and determination kept the work moving and their voices continued to sound the call for change. Special recognition is due to the project leaders: Scott Hromas, Noble Wallace, and Mary West in Colorado; Chuck Manning, William Maust, Jr., and S. Fred Roesel in Florida; Ted Sakai, Rhonda Sasaki, and Marion Tsuji in Hawaii; Terressa Baldrige and Julie McClaughlin in Idaho; Joseph Baldesano, Harold Clarke, and Ronald Limbeck in Nebraska; Wyetta Frederick and Mike Gilmore in West Virginia; and Pamela Brandon and Gerry Konitzer in Wisconsin.

Finally we would like to thank Maggie Pettersen, Aspen Systems Corporation, for editing and coordinating the production of this document.

Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Executive Summary	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Classification Issues for Women Offenders: The Literature	3
Classification for Custody Purposes	3
Classification for Case Management and Treatment Purposes	5
Legal Considerations for the Classification of Women Offenders	6
Chapter 3. NIC Prisons Division: Women’s Classification Initiatives	9
National Assessment of Current Practices for Classifying Women Offenders	9
Working With Correctional Agencies To Improve Classification for Women Offenders.....	12
Chapter 4. Building Blocks to Effective Classification of Women Offenders	19
Validity of the Custody Classification Systems.....	19
Gender-Specific Needs Assessments	25
Chapter 5. Addressing Classification Issues That Require Systemic Change	29
Inadequate Institutional Disciplinary Systems	29
Location of Correctional Institutions for Women.....	30
Management of Women Offenders	30
Lack of Programming	30
Chapter 6. Future Steps	33
Notes	35
References	37

Contents

Appendix A: Descriptions of Seven States’ Women’s Classification Initiatives43

 Colorado Department of Corrections.....44

 Florida Department of Corrections48

 Hawaii Department of Public Safety53

 Idaho Department of Correction56

 Nebraska Department of Correctional Services59

 West Virginia Division of Corrections62

 Wisconsin Department of Corrections66

 Notes68

 References.....70

Appendix B: Sample Initial and Reclassification Instruments Developed by Colorado and Idaho.....75

 Option 1: Colorado Department of Corrections Women’s Initial Custody Rating76

 Model II: The Current System with Two Additional Needs (Mental Health and Relationships): Colorado Department of Corrections Women’s Initial Custody Rating78

 Idaho Department of Correction Initial Classification Score Sheet—Female80

 Idaho Department of Correction Reclassification Score Sheet—Female81

Executive Summary

Since 1990, the number of incarcerated women has increased by 108 percent, while the number of incarcerated men has increased 77 percent. Although these statistics do not surprise correctional administrators, many note that correctional systems remain ill equipped to address the security, programming, and unique needs presented by women offenders. There is widespread agreement that incarcerated women differ from their male counterparts in terms of their behavior, as well as issues related to medical, substance abuse, mental health, and family concerns. Moreover, the characteristics and needs associated with institutional adjustment manifest themselves differently for women than for men. Although generally women pose little threat of violence or escape, their histories of significant substance abuse and mental health problems can result in behaviors that are difficult to predict.

These differences are particularly relevant to institutional classification systems, yet they are poorly accommodated and underresearched. In fact, earlier surveys of corrections personnel found a clear consensus of opinion: correctional classification systems have not provided necessary information about women offenders, were not adapted to women, and were not useful in matching women to appropriate custody levels or programming. While objective prison classification systems for male offenders were well established in virtually every state, similar systems for women offenders remained an afterthought.

In response to this critical need for gender-specific objective classification systems, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) entered into two cooperative agreements, one with the Center for Criminal Justice Research (CCJR) at the University of Cincinnati and another with The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections at The George Washington University. The two projects produced a national assessment of current practices for classifying women offenders and technical assistance to improve classification systems in seven states. This report highlights the two projects' findings.

Classification Issues for Women Offenders: The Literature

These projects were carried out in the context of uncertainty regarding the role and status of objective classification systems for incarcerated women. The literature was unclear as to what should be the goal of classifying women offenders: identification of treatment needs, custody requirements, or both. Furthermore, the scarcity of validation studies involving women prisoners made it impossible to determine whether systems were effectively serving either purpose.

There is widespread agreement that incarcerated women differ from their male counterparts in terms of their behavior, as well as issues related to medical, substance abuse, mental health, and family concerns.

Classification for Custody Purposes

Earlier cross-state surveys of correctional agencies reported that approximately 40 states used the same objective classification system for women and men. Most used a variation of the NIC Model Prisons approach, a system for predicting disciplinary problems. The early NIC classification models contained mostly static variables (e.g., history of institutional violence, severity of current and prior convictions, escape history, current or pending detainers, prior felonies, substance abuse in the community, and prior assaultive behavior). Later NIC versions added such dynamic variables as age, education, employment, and performance in institutional programs and work. Although few disputed the classification focus on prison security, most correctional officials agreed that women offenders were not as dangerous as men. Scant empirical support for this perception was provided by a few state validation studies of custody-based classification systems and a limited number of academic studies conducted prior to the 1980s.

Apart from the issue of dangerousness, some sources questioned the relevance of commonly used institutional custody factors (e.g., number and severity of prior felony convictions) and stability factors (e.g., age, education, and employment) for classifying women prisoners. Research has since identified a number of more relevant risk factors for women, including marital status, suicide attempts, family structure of the childhood home, child abuse, depression, substance abuse, single parenting, reliance on public assistance, dysfunctional relationships, and prison homosexual relationships.

Although it has long been considered problematic, many states used classification systems that had not been validated for women offenders. A related concern questioned whether custody classification systems had been overclassifying women offenders (i.e., assigning them to higher security levels than warranted). Overclassification occurs when—

- ◆ Prediction instruments for populations with low base rates on the criterion variable produce high rates of false-positive decisions.
- ◆ Policies fail to consider that the meaning of custody is relative to the population at hand (e.g., maximum custody men and women who receive similar treatment when their behavior is quite different).
- ◆ The dependent/criterion variable (number of misconducts) captures different behaviors for men and women. This occurs when staff who are ill prepared to supervise women offenders cope by citing women more readily than men for minor infractions. The results inflate reclassification scores for women because most reclassification instruments rely heavily on prison behavior.

Although it has long been considered problematic, many states used classification systems that had not been validated for women offenders.

Classification for Case Management and Treatment Purposes

Institutional classification systems inform offender programming through needs assessments. Most often these are checklists indicating whether an inmate has a history of problems related to substance abuse, physical health, mental health, education, employment, and family issues. More recently, community correctional classification systems have simultaneously assessed risk and needs by tapping criminogenic needs (i.e., dynamic risk factors for criminal behavior). (Dynamic risk factors (e.g., use of illicit substances or alcohol, relationships with individuals involved in criminal behavior, and employment) are statistically correlated with criminal behaviors.) Unlike static risk factors, dynamic risk factors can change over time. Because criminogenic needs parallel many of the dynamic risk factors for custody, they too predict prison misconduct. Merging custody and criminogenic needs into a single prison classification model has its problems, however. Doing so creates an ethically questionable policy of elevating the inmate's custody level according to problems rather than behavior.

Regardless of whether criminogenic needs are used to inform custody decisions, recent interest in gender-specific programming has suggested that needs assessments for women should attend to victimization, childcare, self-esteem, relationships, and women's unique health, substance abuse, and mental health issues. Such factors are seldom identified by the current generation of needs assessment instruments.

Legal Considerations for Classification of Women Offenders

Legal impediments to the development of separate classification systems for men and women may exist. Legal mandates require equal treatment of men and women offenders in matters such as housing, access to legal services, programming, employee wages, medical facilities, and other rights. According to some officials, these parity concerns also require identical classification systems for men and women.

This stance is likely to provide misguided assurances, however. In fact, identical systems often work in unequal ways, as when they are valid for men but not for women; identical systems recognize men's needs better than women's; and they assign similar labels (e.g., maximum custody) to groups that differ in terms of their dangerousness. More logically, some have argued that not having separate classification systems is cause for litigation, as illustrated when the State of Michigan (*Cain v. Michigan DOC*) lost a class action suit brought by women offenders who were classified by the same system used for men.

In summary, the projects began with four issues: validity, overclassification, lack of gender-responsivity, and equity. As an initial task of the NIC cooperative agreements, a national assessment conducted by the CCJR at the University of Cincinnati sought to determine the extent of these concerns among state correctional agencies.

Regardless of whether criminogenic needs are used to inform custody decisions, recent interest in gender-specific programming has suggested that needs assessments for women should attend to victimization, childcare, self-esteem, relationships, and women's unique health, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

Some have argued that not having separate classification systems is cause for litigation.

NIC Prisons Division: Women's Classification Initiatives

National Assessment of Current Practices for Classifying Women Offenders

The national assessment sought detailed descriptions of practices currently used for women offenders, including both problematic areas and emerging strategies. These issues were considered during lengthy telephone interviews with representatives from 50 state correctional agencies and the Federal Bureau of Prisons between February and May 2000. The findings are summarized as follows:

- ◆ The majority of respondents indicated that security and public safety were the most important purposes to be served by incarcerating and classifying women offenders. Even so, respondents in 15 states voiced a desire for a classification model that would also support gender-responsive programming and move women offenders through the system and into community-level facilities more expediently.
- ◆ Only 14 states reported validating their custody classification systems on a sample of women offenders.
- ◆ Twelve states reported different classification procedures for men and women. These differences included four states with separate systems for men and women, four states with different scale cutoff points for men and women, and six states with expanded options on existing variables to better reflect the nature of women's offending (e.g., employment, seriousness of the offense, and escapes).
- ◆ Fifty-one percent of the respondents reported that women either posed less risk than men or a much smaller portion of women than men posed serious threats to institutional and public safety.
- ◆ Ninety-two percent of the respondents asserted that women had unique needs that should be addressed in correctional settings. These needs included parenting and childcare (33 percent), trauma and abuse (23 percent), medical (21 percent), mental health (14 percent), self-esteem and assertiveness (10 percent), vocational (10 percent), and relationship issues (8 percent). However, most states failed to consider these issues in their needs assessments. All but eight states had identical needs assessments for men and women.
- ◆ Many states reported that their systems were overclassifying women offenders. Override rates in 10 states surpassed 15 percent of their scored custody levels (rates ranged from 18 to 70 percent of their cases).
- ◆ All concerns aside, many states were not using their classification system anyway. In a minimum of 35 states, women with different custody levels were housed together in at least one, if not all, of the state's facilities for women. In

Ninety-two percent of the respondents asserted that women had unique needs that should be addressed in correctional settings.

such cases, custody levels did not affect housing, programming, or movement throughout the facility. Furthermore, this practice occurred without significant breaches of security. Custody levels could, however, affect whether a woman worked outside the facility's perimeter, the types of restraints required when transporting her outside the institution, and, more importantly, her eligibility for community placement.

- ◆ Seventeen states employed formal internal classification systems to guide housing assignments. The same systems were used for men and women in these states.

Against the background of the information gathered during the initial stages of these projects (e.g., literature reviews, the national assessment, and focus groups with correctional staff, administrators, and inmates), the following directions were set for subsequent work with seven states:

- ◆ Assess the validity of classification systems for women offenders.
- ◆ Reduce overclassification resulting from invalid classification systems.
- ◆ Improve the relevance of classification factors to women offenders.
- ◆ Assess the contributions of more gender-responsive variables.

Working With Correctional Agencies To Improve Classification for Women Offenders

The projects' cooperative agreements provided technical assistance to the departments of corrections (DOCs) in Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Nebraska, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Each state presented a unique set of issues and questions regarding the classification of its women offenders, yet distinct patterns emerged. A brief synopsis of the work with these seven states follows. More detailed descriptions of their classification initiatives are provided in appendix A of this report and in the individual state reports submitted to NIC (see notes at the end of appendix A).

Colorado Department of Corrections (CO DOC). Beginning in February 2000, this technical assistance project sought to develop a separate classification system for women offenders, identify and test classification factors that were likely to be relevant to women offenders, and assess needs, including gender-responsive needs, as a component of the classification system.

Initially, focus groups with women offenders, correctional staff, and administrators and several meetings with the state's classification steering committee identified several gender-responsive needs for further research (i.e., child abuse, adult victimization, parenting, relationships, self-esteem, and self-efficacy). The steering committee also identified additional needs pertaining to attitudes, peers, mental health, substance abuse, marriage/family, use of leisure time, finances, education, and employment (available through the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI–R)), and they

Executive Summary

modified the CO DOC's intake and reclassification instruments. Data analysis focused on measurement issues and an examination of the relative importance of custody, traditional needs, and gender-responsive needs in predicting prison misconduct and informing programming decisions.

The following 3 classification models were tested on 156 women at prison intake:

- ◆ **Model 1:** Revisions to the current system, an NIC Model Prisons model that included mostly static criminal and institutional history measures. The revisions included two criminogenic needs: history of substance abuse and employment.
- ◆ **Model 2:** The revised custody system (same as model 1) augmented by two gender-specific needs: relationships and mental health.¹
- ◆ **Model 3:** The revised custody system (same as model 1) with a separate needs assessment that did not inform custody level. Gender-responsive needs included mental health, relationships, and child abuse.

All models predicted prison misconduct, but the models containing the gender-responsive variables (models 2 and 3) were more strongly associated with prison misconduct than model 1. Moreover, the revised custody instrument was not valid without the inclusion of the two criminogenic needs, substance abuse and employment. When needs were assembled into a needs assessment instrument (model 3), they were relevant to prison misconduct even though they did not inform the custody levels. In other words, high-need inmates had higher rates of prison misconduct, regardless of whether needs were a part of the custody model. The CO DOC is currently validating the reclassification instruments for the project.

Florida Department of Corrections. On review of the state's classification systems and input from the state's female advisory committee, this classification initiative sought to validate the external and internal classification systems and survey FL DOC inmates about parenting issues.

The custody validation study found that the external system was statistically correlated with institutional adjustment but marred by heavy reliance on mandatory custody criteria, a high rate of discretionary overrides, and overclassification of women offenders into medium custody at initial classification.

The results of the internal system's validation study supported the assumption that needs are correlated with institutional adjustment. The data also supported the assumption that some factors affect men and women differently. Some risk factors hypothesized to be correlated with institutional adjustment among women offenders (e.g., family relationships and friends and peers) were not associated with institutional adjustment at admission. Child welfare and intimate relationships, however, were found to be related to institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders.

In Colorado, high-need inmates had higher rates of prison misconduct, regardless of whether needs were a part of the custody model.

The results of the internal system's validation study supported the assumption that needs are correlated with institutional adjustment. The data also supported the assumption that some factors affect men and women differently.

The parenting survey revealed several troubling findings. Children of women offenders were at greater risk of problems (e.g., out-of-home placements, arrests, or reliance on public assistance) than the children of male inmates. Children of women offenders were also less likely to visit their incarcerated parent.

Hawaii Department of Public Safety. At the beginning of the cooperative agreement, the Hawaii Department of Public Safety (HI DPS) had one facility on the island of Oahu that housed approximately 236 women; an additional 79 women were housed in contracted facilities in Oklahoma. The goals of the project were to reduce overclassification, help women progress to community custody status when appropriate, and reduce the prison population, thereby freeing up sufficient bed space to return the women housed in Oklahoma to the Oahu facility.

The technical assistance involved work with a classification steering committee to redesign and pilot test the state's initial and reclassification instruments on a sample of 125 women. Modified instruments proved to be more valid than the original instruments, and the new instruments simulated a reduction in the custody level for approximately 10 percent of the research sample.

Modifications to traditional custody variables improved the validity of the system, but the greatest improvement resulted from a recommendation to change several nondiscretionary overrides (which affected the majority of inmates) to risk factors on the custody instrument. In this way, these overrides would affect higher custody only if other risk factors were present. In addition, several systemic problems that were contributing to the state's classification problems were identified. Officials sought to improve the systemic issues pertaining to staff shortages and training prior to a full implementation of the modified system.

Idaho Department of Correction. Idaho was one of four states with a separate classification system for its men and women prisoners. Even so, the system had not been validated and appeared to be overclassifying women offenders. In addition, vague aspects of the classification manual raised concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the women's classification system.

The technical assistance entailed a validation study of the current and modified versions of the classification system. It also resulted in the development of a new classification manual. Staff were trained on the use of the modified instruments and the system was implemented in September 2001.

Nebraska Department of Corrections (NE DOC). NE DOC struggled with the task of helping women serving short-term sentences to progress more efficiently to community custody facilities. Because at least 90 percent of incarcerated women offenders were released within 12 months of intake, many were released at a higher than community custody level. The existing custody classification system was designed for longer prison terms, and preliminary analyses suggested that it was invalid for women. A nonclassification issue pertaining to mandatory program

In Hawaii, the greatest improvement resulted from a recommendation to change several nondiscretionary overrides (which affected the majority of inmates) to risk factors on the custody instrument.

Executive Summary

requirements for all inmates also held women at higher than warranted custody levels. The NE DOC classification steering committee recognized that the custody classification model did not serve any real purpose regarding the management of women offenders. Many of the Nebraska classification issues were more pertinent to community risk and programming than to custody.

The technical assistance project sought to validate and integrate a dynamic community risk assessment (LSI-R) to prioritize offender programming decisions and to facilitate community placement decisions. The initial intent was for the LSI-R to work in concert with a revised custody classification system. The custody system, likely to be more relevant to the minority of long-term inmates, would inform institutional placements. However, the committee chose to revise the custody system for both men and women, but to do so at a later date.

Case management staff were trained on the LSI-R and administered the assessment to 100 women offenders. A validation study found that the risk levels were modestly related to serious misconduct and days served in segregation. However, the project experienced several delays. Most importantly, a substantial delay between staff training and their actual use of the LSI-R may have caused a number of reliability and validity problems.

West Virginia Department of Corrections. The West Virginia Department of Corrections (WV DOC) sought to validate its current classification system to reduce overclassification of women offenders and provide better information for programming and housing assignments.

Custody was determined by a public risk scale, which was not valid even when some of the criminal history and institutional adjustment risk factors were modified. The research also showed that dynamic risk factors were consistently better predictors of the women's institutional adjustment than traditional static criminal history factors.

As a result, a full redesign of the classification system for the male and female WV DOC prisoners was recommended. A system combining dynamic risk factors with traditional static risk factors (such as current offense and escape history) was expected to dramatically improve the validity of the classification system.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections requested technical assistance to assess its classification processes and provide recommendations for developing a gender-specific classification model.

A comprehensive onsite assessment was conducted. The process included interviews with central office and facility-based staff, reviews of case files, tours of the facilities housing women offenders, observations of initial classification hearings, program review committee hearings, and reviews of the agency plan, a recent

Dynamic risk factors were consistently better predictors of the women's institutional adjustment than traditional static criminal history factors.

validation study, written policies, classification instruments, and needs assessment instruments. The technical assistance report supported current agency plans for modifying classification instruments and procedures. Based on current research and the experiences of other states, observations and suggestions were provided to strengthen the agency plan.

Building Blocks to Effective Classification of Women Offenders

Several themes and concerns, revealed consistently throughout the literature, the national assessment, and the work with the seven states that were part of the projects, are presented below along with recommendations for improvements.

Validity of the Custody Classification Systems

Recommendation 1: Ensure the validity of classification systems for women offenders. The current data suggest that approximately 30 states do not know whether their custody classification systems are valid because they have not conducted validity studies using samples of women offenders. Concern about this issue is underscored by the fact that validation studies typically find existing systems to be invalid for women. These situations are unethical because housing women at custody levels that affect the austerity of their environment, privileges, and the right to work outside of prison perimeters is unjustifiable.

Recommendation 2: Avoid overclassifying women offenders. Officials from virtually every jurisdiction working with the project expressed concerns about the overclassification of women offenders. Their concerns were supported by the validation studies. Overclassification, however, was caused by invalid classification instruments as well as by certain systemic problems that are discussed in the final section of this report. In addition, modifications to the classification instruments seldom resulted in classification reductions for more than 10 percent of the sample or population. Further shifts in custody distributions—by either modifying custody scale points or changing weights or scores for key risk factors—were not possible due to mandatory restrictions or departmental directives. Moreover, modifications to scale cutpoints could occur only if the system remained valid after doing so. Often it did not.

Recommendation 3: Modify current risk factors and/or scale cutpoints to reflect differences between women and men. Validation studies often find statistically significant differences in the predictive power of risk factors for men and women offenders. Factors pertaining to age, criminal history, current offense, and stability often work differently for men and women.

Approximately 30 states do not know whether their custody classification systems are valid because they have not conducted validity studies using samples of women offenders.

Executive Summary

States have achieved more predictive custody classification systems for women by either excluding prior criminal history risk factors or reducing their weights or scores.

Age. Several validation studies indicated that the rate of institutional infractions decreases at an earlier age for men than for women. Therefore, different age categories for men and women offenders often enhanced the predictive power of the instruments.

Criminal history. With few exceptions, criminal history factors have been poor predictors of institutional adjustment for women offenders—particularly at reclassification. However, very few women offenders receive high scores on these factors. Therefore, states have achieved more predictive custody classification systems for women by either excluding prior criminal history risk factors or reducing their weights or scores.

Severity of the current offense. Recognition of women's different pathways to crime prompted a number of attempts to reconfigure this risk factor. However, these efforts were hampered when files contained insufficient details pertaining to the current offense. Moreover, violent offenses characterized so few women that only an inordinately large sample could have supported an examination of the impact of types of violence.

One exception to this pattern was observed in an Oklahoma study of the effects of victim-offender relationship, substance abuse, offender and co-offender relationship, and type of victim. Women incarcerated for victimless crimes (e.g., drug-related, property) had statistically fewer infractions, and women who were involved in crime with a male codefendant or family member had the highest rates of institutional infractions.

In other studies, attempts to test whether women who murdered an abuser in self-defense were less disruptive than other violent offenders found too few women who fit this description to support tests conducted on samples of 100–150 inmates. Even so, none of these women were observed to have a misconduct of *any* kind. Most of these matters should continue to be tested using larger samples.

Stability factors. Many states include various indicators of offender stability on their initial classification and reclassification instruments. Most of these indicators also can be considered dynamic risk factors. The most common initial classification stability factors include age, employment at the time of arrest, education, and substance abuse. Reclassification instruments often add factors pertaining to institutional behavior, including participation in institutional programming. Correct use of these factors often enhanced the validity of classification systems for women:

- ◆ **Employment.** This risk factor should include childcare and homemaker roles in the operational definition of fully employed.
- ◆ **Education.** Academic achievement appeared to be an indicator of stability among men but not women offenders. In contrast to men, women with high school diplomas or the equivalency incurred more misconduct reports than less educated women. The factor was often omitted on modified systems for women.

- ◆ **Substance abuse.** The reliability and validity of substance abuse as an indicator of stability have been problematic and results have been mixed. Too often operational definitions have allowed for subjective interpretations as to what constitutes substance abuse. One study that operationalized substance abuse according to two established assessments, however, found that both strongly predicted prison misconduct. Even with a valid and reliable indicator, however, the pervasiveness of substance abuse among women offenders (75 to 80 percent of the population) sometimes rendered the item useless for custody assessment purposes.
- ◆ **Relationships.** Correctional staff often cited institutional and community relationships as risk factors for women offenders. Attempts to examine the role of relationships, however, often result in very different operational definitions and measures. Moreover, few data are available in inmates' files to guide the development of reliable, objective risk factors to assess an inmate's relationships. Therefore, findings regarding relationships varied considerably across the studies. Factors pertaining to child welfare, intimate relationships, and family relationships were unreliable and not related to institutional adjustment among women offenders in Florida. Data from West Virginia, on the other hand, indicated that stressful institutional relationships significantly predicted institutional infractions. Moreover, the presence of multiple stress factors, including child custody and legal matters, was highly correlated with institutional adjustment. In the Colorado study, the term "relationship" was operationalized as codependency or a tendency to lose too much personal power in intimate relationships and it was strongly related to prison misconduct.
- ◆ **Other stability factors.** Other stability factors, such as the need for medical, mental health, and substance abuse services, were found in an Oklahoma study to be significantly related to women's early prison adjustment.² The Colorado study expanded this inquiry into additional gender-specific variables, including child abuse, adult victimization, parenting, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and relationships. Among a group of women at intake, child abuse, mental health, relationships, and substance abuse factors were strongly related to prison misconduct. Because these factors are dynamic, they must be updated for each reclassification.

Gender-Specific Needs Assessments

Recommendation 4: Develop comprehensive classification systems that assign women to meaningful programs. Long-standing correctional standards maintain that offenders should be classified according to needs related to prison adjustment, institutional safety, recidivism, and reentry to the community. Comprehensive needs assessments should consider both the presence and intensity of the need. They should triage certain high-need offenders into more detailed assessments and test batteries. Changes in the composition of prison populations as a result of the war on drugs and increases in the number of dual-diagnosed and mentally ill inmates, as well as calls for more gender-responsive programming, underscore the need for gender-specific needs assessments.

Data from West Virginia indicated that stressful institutional relationships significantly predicted institutional infractions.

Inadequate disciplinary codes are a primary contributor to the overclassification of women offenders because of differences in the institutional behaviors of men and women.

Recommendation 5: Develop objective and reliable needs assessment processes.

Needs assessments should specify objective criteria, require documentation, and require that raters indicate how many domains of a problem exist (e.g., does substance abuse affect work, family relationships, and medical problems?). They should not ask for judgment calls about the intensity of a problem. Needs assessments should be reliable, thereby resulting in consistent scores across raters.

Recommendation 6: Focus on criminogenic needs to increase the utility of needs assessments.

Dynamic criminogenic needs are those that have been statistically correlated with criminal behavior and that reduce criminal behavior when they are successfully treated. Agencies wishing to prevent future offending should focus on the problems associated with future offending. Such needs are often related to prison misconduct as well.

Recommendation 7: Include gender-specific needs in screening and assessment tools.

In addition to the considerations raised in recommendation 6, agencies should examine and test needs assessments for the presence of needs pertaining to abuse, parenting, relationships, health, substance abuse, and emotional stability.

Addressing Classification Issues That Require Systemic Change

In addition to exploring these building blocks, the project learned some very important lessons about systemic issues that can hamper correctional operations and render even the most valid and comprehensive classification system ineffective. The following issues, although not directly related to classification, were the most prevalent systemic issues that affected the classifications of prisoners.

Inadequate institutional disciplinary systems. Inadequate disciplinary codes are a primary contributor to the overclassification of women offenders because of differences in the institutional behaviors of men and women. Institutional infractions that vary in threats to the safety and security of the institution (e.g., assaults) should not be combined and assigned identical codes. For classification purposes, the disciplinary policy should be revised to ensure that infraction codes are mutually exclusive and exhaustive.

Location of correctional institutions for women. Most state correctional systems have very few correctional facilities for women offenders. Frequently these are located in rural areas, far from the urban communities in which the majority of the women lived prior to their incarceration. This distance creates barriers to family visitation, work and educational opportunities, and access to medical and mental health services. The rural setting sometimes creates cultural barriers within the facility between staff and inmates. These problems may exacerbate disciplinary problems if not properly addressed because women's institutional adjustment is often influenced by their relationships (within and outside the facility), concerns for children, and other stress factors.

Management of women offenders. In most state correctional agencies, basic training for correctional officers and caseworkers does not focus on women offenders.³ Many staff resist working in the women’s facility and see the job assignment as a second-tier position or steppingstone to a more coveted position. Inexperienced staff, especially, may be quick to write up women for disobedience of a direct order, disrespect to staff, disorderly conduct, yelling, and unauthorized possession of property. Although these are relatively minor incidents, multiple infractions of this nature could quickly elevate a woman to medium or close custody.

Lack of programming. In addition to the concerns about the absence of gender-responsive programming, many correctional systems are hampered by the lack of resources for *any* type of programming. These problems may contribute to overclassification because participation in work and programs often translates into more successful prison adjustment and lower reclassification scores. Additionally, program participation sometimes is a prerequisite for a reduced classification. Prisoners who cannot participate in program requirements because programs are unavailable may be held at higher custody levels regardless of the adequacy of the classification system.

Future Steps

The call for more data and more research is a common theme among researchers. The suggestion for continued work to validate classification systems, test alternative risk factors, and develop more relevant needs assessment processes may appear to be redundant and trite. Yet the requests from state and local correctional systems to assess and fine-tune their classification systems speak to the need to continue this research. Indeed, 30 states still have not validated their classification systems for women.

Furthermore, the research highlighted in this report needs to be replicated in other jurisdictions before any further generalizations can be made. NIC has long advocated that validation studies be specific to the populations being classified. The inconsistencies in the risk factors observed thus far suggest that there is still much to learn about the classification of women offenders. At the same time, the number of women offenders under correctional supervision continues to grow while resources decline. In spite of fewer resources, the need to develop valid and reliable risk and needs assessment systems for managing and serving prison populations becomes more critical each year.

Given these harsh realities, future efforts should focus on helping agencies develop systems that are both practical and feasible. Just as researchers dependably call for more research, correctional administrators are consistently asked to “do more with

Prisoners who cannot participate in program requirements because programs are unavailable may be held at higher custody levels regardless of the adequacy of the classification system.

Executive Summary

less.” Scarce resources should provide maximum returns; therefore, future initiatives should concentrate on models that require reasonable efforts in terms of training, staffing, validation, and implementation. With these initiatives, it is anticipated that new lessons will be learned and previous lessons will be further refined. If the classification system is to continue to serve as the brain of the correctional system, it must be responsive to risks and needs posed by women as well as men. Unfortunately, there is still much to discover about how to make the systems more gender specific.

Notes

1. Of the gender-responsive needs, mental health, relationships, and child abuse were found to be strongly correlated with prison misconduct. The classification steering committee did not recommend including child abuse in a custody instrument; it was, however, included in the needs assessment for model 3.
2. One variation of stability factors included substance abuse, emotional stability, mental health, sex offender, and reintegration needs. These factors were not statistically correlated with institutional adjustment.
3. The National Institute of Corrections provides training on women offender issues as a part of its curriculum offerings on agency planning, operational practices, sexual misconduct, and classification. However, because of limitations on class size, only a small percentage of the personnel who work at women’s correctional facilities have an opportunity to attend. In addition, because of the nature of the training—operational practices and agency planning—the sessions are limited to more experienced staff.

Introduction

The number of women offenders in federal and state prisons doubled in the 1990s, growing faster than the male population (General Accounting Office, 1999). Since 1995, the female prison population has grown at least 10 percent each year in 13 states. North Dakota reported the highest average annual increase in female prisoners (23 percent), followed by Montana (22 percent), West Virginia and Idaho (both 18 percent), and Wisconsin (17 percent). New York (-2.4 percent) was the only state to report a decrease in female prisoners since 1995 (Harrison and Beck, 2002). By the end of 2001, women accounted for 6.6 percent of state and federal prisoners, up from 4.1 percent in 1980 and 5.7 percent in 1990 (Harrison and Beck, 2002). Although these statistics do not surprise administrators, correctional systems remain ill equipped to address the security, programming, and special needs presented by women offenders. Many have argued that because both facilities and policies in U.S. correctional systems were designed to accommodate male inmates, they are based on behaviors and risk factors that have little or no relevance to women offenders.

Although the literature regarding the design and effectiveness of correctional programming for women offenders is somewhat limited and dated, women offenders' unique needs and issues have been well documented. There is widespread agreement that incarcerated women differ from their male counterparts in terms of their behavior, as well as their medical, substance abuse, mental health, and family concerns (Snell and Morton, 1994). The characteristics and needs associated with institutional adjustment manifest themselves differently in women than in men. Although generally women pose little threat of violence or escape, their histories of significant substance abuse and mental health problems can produce behaviors that are difficult to predict. These differences are particularly relevant to institutional classification systems, yet they are poorly accommodated and underresearched.

In 1994, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) sponsored a study to assess the programming needs of incarcerated women and to identify promising interventions (Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Among the identified management issues were problems emerging from overcrowding, inadequate programming, and shortcomings in classification procedures. Administrators reported that their classification systems did not provide needed information, were not adapted to women, and were not useful in matching women to appropriate custody levels or programs. Further, classification and screening instruments did not direct where women should be housed or what programs should be offered to them. This was true even in larger states that had a greater range of options. A lack of space and the constant movement of large numbers of women were cited as operational barriers.

Correctional systems remain ill equipped to address the security, programming, and special needs presented by women offenders.

Chapter 1

Dissatisfied with the current classification systems, correctional administrators appeared to have only three options: use the current instruments and override the scored custody levels, modify the current risk factors and/or scale cutpoints, or discontinue use of the current instruments and classify the women based on an intuitive, subjective process. Regardless of the option selected, the agencies have continued to classify women according to systems that were not designed or validated according to the risk factors relevant to their custody, housing, or programming needs. Thus, while objective prison classification systems for male prisoners were well established in virtually every state, similar systems for women offenders remained an afterthought.

While objective prison classification systems for male prisoners were well established in virtually every state, similar systems for women offenders remained an afterthought.

In response to this critical need for gender-specific and objective classification systems, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) entered into a cooperative agreement with the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati under which the university assessed state correctional agencies' existing classification policies and procedures for women offenders. The project also provided technical assistance to three state correctional agencies to develop and implement gender-specific classification systems. Because interest and commitment expressed by state agencies was greater than what could be accommodated under the first cooperative agreement, NIC entered into a second agreement with The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections at The George Washington University to provide technical assistance to four additional state agencies.

Together, the two projects amassed a wealth of information about existing practices for classifying women offenders; they also provided a rich opportunity to test options for improvement. This report highlights the two projects' findings.

Classification Issues for Women Offenders: The Literature

The national assessment of state correctional agencies and the provision of technical assistance to seven states occurred in the context of uncertainty regarding the role and status of objective classification systems for incarcerated women. The literature was unclear as to what should be the goal of classifying women: identification of treatment needs, custody requirements, or both. Had agencies intended their classification systems to inform custody, programming, or housing decisions or a combination of these? Furthermore, so few validation studies involving women prisoners existed that it was impossible to determine whether systems were effectively serving *any* of these purposes.

Classification for Custody Purposes

Earlier cross-state surveys of correctional agencies reported that approximately 40 states used the same objective classification system for women and men (Burke and Adams, 1991; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Most used a variation of the NIC Model Prisons approach, a system for predicting disciplinary problems (National Institute of Corrections, 1979). Early NIC classification models contained mostly static variables (e.g., history of institutional violence, severity of current and prior convictions, escape history, current or pending detainers, prior felonies, substance abuse in the community, and prior assaultive behavior). Later NIC versions added such dynamic variables as age, education, employment, and performance in institutional programs and work.

A focus on prison security seemed appropriate given the increases in the size of female populations and changes in their composition (e.g., increases in the number of members of security threat groups and younger offenders). However, most correctional officials agreed that women offenders were not as dangerous as men (Burke and Adams, 1991; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Scant empirical support for this perception was provided by a few state validation studies of custody-based classification systems (Alexander and Humphrey, 1988; Hardyman, 1999). Several additional studies conducted prior to the 1980s also supported this assumption (Bowker, 1981). Others asserted that women offenders were becoming more aggressive and problematic (Kruttschnitt and Krmpotich, 1990; Tischler and Marquart, 1989; Williams, 1981).

Most correctional officials agreed that women offenders were not as dangerous as men.

Apart from the issue of dangerousness, some sources questioned the relevance of commonly used institutional custody factors (e.g., number and severity of prior felony convictions) and stability factors (e.g., age, education, and employment) for classifying women prisoners (Burke and Adams, 1991; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Research has since identified a number of more relevant risk factors for women, including marital status, suicide attempts, family structure of the childhood home, child abuse, depression, substance abuse, single parenting, reliance on public assistance, and dysfunctional relationships (Forcier, 1995; Balthazar and Cook, 1984; Kruttschnitt and Krmpotich, 1990; McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch, 1997; Bonta, Pang, and Wallace-Capretta, 1995; Covington, 1998). More controversial works cited prison homosexual relationships as the impetus for aggressive behavior among women prisoners (Tischler and Marquart, 1989).

Even more difficult were questions regarding the validity of the current classification models for women offenders. Although it has long been considered problematic to apply a risk or needs assessment to a population for which it has not been validated (American Association of Correctional Psychologists Standards Committee, 2000; American Psychological Association, 1992), failure to validate correctional assessments to specific populations has occurred too frequently (Van Voorhis and Brown, 1996). This problem has not been unique to corrections. Indeed, the failure to assess the applicability of research findings to specific populations also was found on notable occasions in the fields of education, mental health, and medicine (Sternberg and Williams, 1997; Gilligan, 1993; Arnstein, Buselli, and Rankin, 1996; Martin et al., 1998). Whether pertinent to drug dosages, health screens, educational tests, mental health assessments, or correctional classification, the practice of testing a procedure on predominantly male populations and then generalizing findings to women historically has endangered women's health, safety, and opportunities for advancement.

A closely related issue was whether custody classification systems have been overclassifying women offenders (i.e., assigning them to higher security levels than warranted). Overclassification can occur in three ways. First, prediction instruments for populations with low base rates on the criterion variable produce high rates of false-positive decisions (Brennan, 1998; Clear, 1988). In other words, if the behavior to be predicted is a rare event (e.g., serious institutional violence), then the number of women erroneously predicted to be involved in a serious institutional assault increases. The result is that too many women are classified at higher custody levels than needed to ensure the safety of the facility.

Second, even among inmates for whom a maximum custody classification indicates a greater likelihood of problematic behavior than among minimum custody inmates, the meaning of "serious" is relative to the population at hand (Van Voorhis and Brown, 1996). Maximum custody for a group with a low base rate (e.g., women offenders) could translate into 5 percent of the group committing a serious prison misconduct, whereas the same label for a group with a higher base rate (e.g., male

If the behavior to be predicted is a rare event (e.g., serious institutional violence), then the number of women erroneously predicted to be involved in a serious institutional assault increases.

inmates) could translate into a 20-percent rate of serious misconduct. Simply put, women assigned to maximum custody have different rates of serious misconduct reports than men assigned to maximum custody.

Third, if the dependent/criterion variable (number of misconduct reports) captures different behaviors for men and women, the custody level for one group is inflated at reclassification because of the weight assigned to recent institutional misconduct at reassessment. Staff who are ill prepared to supervise women offenders may cope by citing women more readily than men for minor infractions (Dobash, Dobash, and Gutteridge, 1986). The result inflates reclassification scores because most reclassification instruments rely heavily on prison behavior.

Classification for Case Management and Treatment Purposes

Most custody classification systems have not been designed to inform treatment-related decisions (Andrews and Bonta, 1998; Van Voorhis, 1994). Such decisions require needs-based assessment tools. These typically consist of checklists indicating whether the inmate has a history of problems related to substance abuse, physical health, mental health, education, employment, and family issues. More recently, community correctional classification systems have simultaneously assessed risk and needs by tapping criminogenic needs (i.e., dynamic risk factors for criminal behavior) (Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge, 1990; Andrews and Bonta, 1998). Dynamic risk factors (e.g., use of illicit substances or alcohol, relationships with individuals involved in criminal behavior, and employment) are statistically correlated with criminal behaviors and are subject to change. Because dynamic risk factors for criminal behavior parallel many dynamic risk factors for custody, they too predict prison misconduct (Andrews and Bonta, 1995). Some authors argued, however, against merging custody and needs assessments into a single prison classification model able to serve both purposes (Adams and Henning, 1982). This admonition reflected ethical concerns about the potential of elevating custody levels based on inmates' problems rather than their behavior.

Whether criminogenic needs inform custody decisions or not, the return of treatment as a core feature of correctional policy and philosophy highlights the importance of accurate needs assessments. At the same time, recent interest in gender-specific programming has suggested that needs assessments for women also should address the issues of victimization, childcare, self-esteem, relationships, and women's unique health, substance abuse, and mental health conditions and problems (Brennan, 1998; LIS, Inc., 1998; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Although previous studies argued that criminogenic needs are the same for men and women, research on this issue remains equivocal. In a meta-analysis of delinquency causation studies, for example, Simourd and Andrews (1994) reported that the most important criminogenic needs were the same for men and women. Lowenkamp and

The return of treatment as a core feature of correctional policy and philosophy highlights the importance of accurate needs assessments.

Women's offenses are more likely to involve relationship issues and less likely to involve antisocial rationalizations.

The prospect of housing women in more austere environments on the basis of their problems, rather than their behavior, raises disturbing ethical issues.

Latessa (2002) suggested that only some criminogenic needs are the same for men and women and that even these may have different roles and predictive powers for men and women. However, because neither study adequately considered gender-specific needs, it is not known whether adding such factors would change their conclusions in important ways.

In many ways, current needs assessments do not reflect the most recent research on women's criminality. Women appear to have different paths to substance abuse than men (Wanberg and Milkman, 1998). Their offenses are more likely to involve relationship issues and less likely to involve antisocial rationalizations (Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan, 1995; Covington, 1998; Erez, 1988). Women offenders are far more likely than men to be diagnosed with mental illness. Therefore, advocates of gender-responsive programming have recommended interventions that target physical and sexual abuse, relationships, self-esteem, gender-responsive dimensions of substance abuse, and mental health (Belknap, Holsinger, and Dunn, 1998; Bloom and Owen, 2004; Dembo et al., 1992; Holsinger, 1999; Miller et al., 1995; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). Including gender-specific needs on needs assessment instruments would facilitate the development and provision of gender-responsive programming.

The possibility that some of the gender-specific needs may also predict prison misconduct or new offending complicates matters. Although problematic for both men and women, abuse and neglect are stronger predictors of future offending for women than they are for men (McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch, 1997; Rivera and Widom, 1990). Studies of incarcerated men and women consistently found that many more women than men report past physical and sexual abuse (Dembo et al., 1992; Holsinger, 1999; McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch, 1997; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998; Snell and Morton, 1994). Finally, the causal paths between physical and sexual abuse and offending among women may be intertwined with anxiety, depression, emotional problems, low self-esteem, and substance abuse (Miller et al., 1995; McClellan, Farabee, and Crouch, 1997).

Of course, incorporating needs resulting from such problems as abuse, depression, and low self-esteem into risk assessments or custody determinations presents a new set of concerns for treatment and classification staff. Even though such factors may be highly predictive, the prospect of housing women in more austere environments on the basis of their problems, rather than their behavior, raises disturbing ethical issues.

Legal Considerations for the Classification of Women Offenders

Although researchers and practitioners have highlighted a number of reasons for constructing separate classification systems for men and women, legal impediments exist. As a result of much litigation and legislation, correctional agencies were mandated to afford equal treatment to men and women in such matters as housing,

access to legal services, programming, employee wages, medical facilities, and other rights. Many interpreted classification to fall within this rubric. As a result, some corrections officials vehemently defined parity as requiring identical classification systems for men and women (Brennan, 1998).

This stance, however, provides misguided assurances. Indeed, when identical systems are valid for men but not for women, equity is *not* present. Moreover, a system that better recognizes men's risk than women's risk is inherently unequal. Finally, if proportionately more maximum custody men commit predatory acts than similarly classified women, the system already lacks parity. In these instances, even though the classification instruments and procedures look identical, they produce disparate outcomes. In response, some have argued that not having separate systems is cause for litigation (Austin, Chan, and Elms, 1993; Brennan, 1998). This was recently illustrated when the state of Michigan (*Cain v. Michigan Department of Corrections*) lost a class action suit brought by women offenders who were classified by the same system as that used for men.

In summary, this literature review frames four crucial issues: validity, overclassification, lack of gender responsiveness, and equity. Earlier, somewhat dated, national surveys indicated that most agencies used identical systems to classify men and women offenders (Burke and Adams, 1991; Morash, Bynum, and Koons, 1998). It was clear that the validity of the current systems for women offenders was a question that had long beset the corrections field. The surveys detected no examples of classification factors that were optimally relevant to women's offending patterns or programming needs. In fact, the use of gender-responsive factors has been discouraged because of legal reasons, such as equal protection concerns, the lack of research on women-specific predictors of institutional infractions, ongoing disagreements as to whether women offenders exhibited enough dangerous behaviors to predict, and arguments about whether women should be classified according to risk.¹

A system that better recognizes men's risk than women's risk is inherently unequal.

NIC Prisons Division: Women's Classification Initiatives

National Assessment of Current Practices for Classifying Women Offenders

As an initial task of the NIC cooperative agreement, the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati conducted a national assessment of existing classification practices for women offenders (Van Voorhis and Presser, 2001). The assessment sought to explore the prevalence of problems highlighted in the literature and the approaches that agencies had formulated for resolving them. Of interest were correctional officials' perceptions of whether their systems worked for women and the purposes they assigned to their classification systems—custody, programming, and/or housing. The assessment also explored the extent to which officials perceived the classification issues of women and men to be different and whether changes to their systems had been made to account for these differences. Finally, the assessment examined the psychometric quality of the systems: What were the origins of these models? Were they developed specifically for women offenders or were they designed for men and applied to women? How many states had validated their classification systems using samples of women offenders?

These issues were addressed during lengthy telephone interviews with representatives from the 50 state correctional agencies and the Federal Bureau of Prisons between February and May 2000. Most of the respondents (33) were state directors of classification, 5 were administrators of women's facilities, 4 were research analysts, 1 was a clinical director, and 8 served in another administrative capacity (e.g., regional administrator). Consultants and researchers who had worked with the agencies were contacted as needed regarding the design and validation of the classification systems.

Although many respondents discussed clear differences between men and women offenders in terms of their needs and risks to institutional and public safety, very few states had incorporated these differences into their objective prison classification systems. Their responses to key questions are summarized below.²

Are Women and Men Classified Differently?

Most respondents reported that the systems in which they worked did not classify men and women differently. They considered the custody assessment to be the foundation of their classification system.

Although many respondents discussed clear differences between men and women offenders in terms of their needs and risks to institutional and public safety, very few states had incorporated these differences into their objective prison classification systems.

Assertions that a system had been developed for both men and women did not mean that it had been validated for use with women offenders or that it used factors relevant to women.

Twenty-one states used a system based on the NIC Model Prisons instrument in which reclassification occurred at intervals ranging from 3 to 6 months. Fourteen states reclassified women annually. Of course, for women serving short sentences, annual reclassification often meant no reclassification.

Most states' classification systems were either developed for both men and women (39 states) or developed for men and later applied to women (4 states). However, assertions that a system had been developed for both did not mean that it had been validated for use with women prisoners or that it used factors relevant to women.

Thirty-four states used an objective tool to summarize offenders' needs. Yet only eight states reported use of a system that identified needs in a gender-specific manner. Seventeen states employed formal internal classification systems to guide housing assignments. In all these states, the same systems were used for men and women.

Twelve states reported different classification procedures for men and women. The distinctions were as follows:

- ◆ Four states—Idaho, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio—used different custody assessment instruments for women.
- ◆ Four states used the same custody assessment instruments for men and women, but used different custody scales, or cutpoints, for women.
- ◆ Two states changed specific variables to better reflect the nature of women's offending and their prison misconduct. For example, New York State reduced points on a common variable, seriousness of the current offense, for women who killed an abuser in self-defense.
- ◆ Four states expanded the operational definition of risk factors to better fit the nature of women's offenses and infractions. Employment variables, for example, were changed to avoid scoring full-time homemakers or parents as unemployed.

What Should Be the Primary Purpose of Classifying Women Offenders?

Security and public safety were reported by the majority of respondents as the most important goals served by classifying women offenders.

What Additional Considerations Should Govern the Classification of Women Offenders?

The expedient movement of women to the least restrictive environment and the provision of gender-responsive programming were common responses. Even though safety was their primary concern, respondents in 15 states voiced a strong desire for

classification models that also would move lower risk women to minimum or community custody more quickly. An additional concern for respondents was gender-responsive assessment and programming that addressed such needs as parenting and childcare (33 percent), trauma and abuse (23 percent), medical (21 percent), mental health (14 percent), self-esteem/assertiveness (10 percent), vocational (10 percent), and relationship issues (8 percent). In fact, 49 respondents (92 percent) agreed that the unique needs of women should be addressed in correctional settings.

What Problems Are Encountered When Classifying Women Offenders?

Problems observed by respondents included the following:

Custody classification systems appeared to overclassify women offenders. Many reported that their systems assigned too many women to unnecessarily high custody levels. Officials had to override the classification instrument to properly place the women in lower custody levels. Representatives of 10 states indicated that more than 15 percent of cases required an override (rates ranged from 18 to 70 percent of cases). When override rates surpass 15 percent, most classification researchers maintain that the classification system begins to reflect staff discretion rather than objective criterion-based scoring.

Custody classification systems had not been validated among women offenders in many states. Only 14 states had validated their classification system using samples that included only women prisoners. Eleven states (not included in the 14 with women-specific studies) included women in validation samples that were predominately male.³

Custody classification systems were not always used to inform assignments to facilities, housing units, or programming. Given that public safety and security were reported as the primary concerns of these respondents, it was surprising to learn that women with different custody levels were housed together in 35 states. Thus, for women, unlike men, the assigned custody level did not have an impact on decisions about housing, privileges, programming, or movement throughout the facility. Custody levels did, however, affect job assignments and the types of restraints required outside the security perimeter. More importantly, custody level determined eligibility for a community placement.

Most needs assessment instruments were not gender specific. Although 49 respondents (98 percent) identified needs that were unique to women offenders, most states had not tailored their needs assessment processes to track these needs. Only eight states had provisions to assess men and women differently.

In sum, the national assessment found that most states continued to use identical systems for men and women and most had no empirical basis for knowing whether their classification systems were valid for women offenders. Almost all respondents

For women, unlike men, the assigned custody level did not have an impact on decisions about housing, privileges, programming, or movement throughout the facility.

claimed that women's needs were different from those of men, but only eight agencies incorporated these differences into objective needs assessments processes. The number of states making improvements had not changed significantly since the earlier surveys. In fact, two states that had gender-specific classification systems had changed back to systems that are uniform for men and women.⁴

Working With Correctional Agencies To Improve Classification for Women Offenders

As previously indicated, NIC entered into two cooperative agreements to provide direct technical assistance to state correctional agencies. The first, with Dr. Patricia Van Voorhis of the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati, provided technical assistance to Colorado, Hawaii, and Nebraska. The second, with Dr. Patricia Hardyman at The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections at The George Washington University, provided technical assistance to Florida, Idaho, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Each state presented a unique set of issues and questions regarding the classification of its women offenders, yet distinct patterns emerged across the states. A brief synopsis of the issues and developments with these seven states follows. (More detailed descriptions of the classification initiatives of the seven states are provided in appendix A and the individual state reports submitted to NIC.)

Colorado Department of Corrections

As of April 2000, the Colorado Department of Corrections (CO DOC) housed approximately 1,200 women in 3 correctional facilities. CO DOC staff requested technical assistance to develop a separate classification system for women offenders, identify and test classification variables that were likely to be relevant to women offenders, and assess needs (including gender-responsive needs) as a component of the classification model. With the development of a new multiple custody facility with space for extensive programming and services, the CO DOC wanted to use a gender-responsive model that would support its programming efforts and prevent overclassification of women offenders.

Through focus groups with women offenders, line staff, and administrators, the following gender-responsive needs and issues were identified for further research: child abuse, adult victimization, parenting, relationships, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Scales were selected or constructed to assess these needs. An agency classification steering committee suggested modifications to the existing custody classification and reclassification instruments. Measures pertaining to additional needs (e.g., attitudes, peers, mental health, substance abuse, marriage/family, use of leisure time, finances, education, and employment) were available through Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI–R) (Andrews and Bonta, 1995) and through additional assessments conducted at prison intake and available on the CO DOC information system.

Data on the current and revised intake custody instruments, LSI-R scores, and gender-responsive scales were collected for a sample of 156 newly admitted women offenders. These women also were tracked for 6 months to obtain followup data pertaining to prison misconduct.

Using these measures, the analyses tested three possible classification models:

- ◆ **Model 1:** Revisions to the current system, an NIC Model Prisons structure, which included mostly static criminal and institutional history measures. The revisions included two criminogenic needs: history of substance abuse and employment.
- ◆ **Model 2:** The revised custody system (model 1) augmented by two gender-responsive needs: relationships and mental health.⁵
- ◆ **Model 3:** The revised custody system (model 1) with a separate needs assessment. In this case, the needs assessment consisted of the LSI-R with a “trailer” instrument to measure child abuse, mental health, and relationships.

All of the models were valid, but those containing the gender-responsive variables (models 2 and 3) were more strongly associated with prison misconduct than model 1. Moreover, the revised custody instrument (model 1) was not valid without the two criminogenic needs: substance abuse and employment. When needs were assembled into a needs assessment instrument, model 3, they were relevant to custody even though they did not inform the custody levels. In other words, high-need inmates incurred more prison misconduct reports, regardless of whether their needs were a part of the custody model.

A gender-specific reclassification instrument also was developed as a part of this cooperative agreement. Although it was not tested during the cooperative agreement due to time constraints, the CO DOC is currently validating this instrument.

Florida Department of Corrections

The Florida Department of Corrections (FL DOC) requested technical assistance to assess the validity of its external and internal classification systems for its female inmate population. Because its classification systems were primarily designed and piloted on the male inmate population, the FL DOC wanted to ensure that the gender-specific risks and needs of the female population were addressed adequately.

The FL DOC's female advisory committee also expressed interest in the development of a needs assessment process that would systematically compile and assess the inmates' social, physical, and economic problems. The committee observed that, although the internal system assesses inmates' mental health, substance abuse, educational, and vocational needs, data on inmates' wellness/life skills, financial management skills, relationships (both within and outside the penal system), and

High-need inmates incurred more prison misconduct reports, regardless of whether their needs were a part of the custody model.

parenting skills were not assessed. The committee also suggested that the current assessment of vocational needs should be expanded to include inmates' vocational aptitudes to facilitate placement in an appropriate training program.

Based on a review of the classification systems and input from the female advisory committee, this classification initiative sought to validate the external and internal classification systems and conduct a parenting survey among FL DOC inmates.

The custody validation study indicated that the external system was statistically correlated with institutional adjustment and identified statistically distinct custody levels. The analyses identified three concerns:

1. Heavy reliance on mandatory custody criteria.
2. High rate of discretionary overrides.
3. Overclassification of women offenders designated as medium custody at initial classification.

The results of the internal system's validation study supported the assumption that needs are correlated with institutional adjustment. The factors with the strongest correlation were outside work assignment, internal management (inmate's potential for institutional violence), internal housing (inmate's need for secure cell, room, or open day dorm), and restructuring potential (inmate's potential to benefit from program participation). The data also supported the assumption that some factors affect men and women differently. It was surprising that some risk factors hypothesized to be correlated with institutional adjustment among women offenders, such as family relationships, friends, and peers, were not associated with institutional adjustment at admission. Child welfare and intimate relationships were related to institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders.

Although the parenting survey offered few surprises, a troubling finding was that children of women offenders appeared to be at greater risk than the children of male inmates. For example, women offenders' children were more likely to have been placed out of the home by the court, arrested, and supported by welfare, foster parents, or the juvenile justice system. Children of women offenders also were less likely to visit their incarcerated parent.

Hawaii Department of Public Safety

The Hawaii Department of Public Safety (HI DPS) had a facility on the island of Oahu that housed approximately 236 women at the beginning of the cooperative agreement (March 2000). At that time, an additional 79 women were housed in contracted facilities in Oklahoma. The HI DPS requested technical assistance to address concerns regarding overclassification and the inability of the women to progress to community custody status. The goal was to develop a new classification model that would safely eliminate the overclassification of women offenders, and

In Florida, children of women offenders appeared to be at greater risk than the children of male inmates.

efficiently move more of them to community-based facilities, and ultimately provide sufficient bed space in the Oahu facility to return the women from Oklahoma to Hawaii.

Through the technical assistance, the custody classification and reclassification instruments were redesigned and pilot tested on a sample of 125 women. In Hawaii, modified instruments proved to be more valid than the original instruments. In addition, the new instruments showed that it would be possible to reduce the custody level for approximately 10 percent of the research sample.

Modifications were made to several classification variables, and they contributed to a more valid system. However, the greatest improvement resulted from a recommendation to change the mandatory override factor regarding "time remaining to serve" to a risk factor on the custody instrument. In this way, time-to-serve only raised the inmates' custody level if additional risk factors were present. On the original classification instruments, *mandatory* override factors determined the custody level of the majority of Hawaii's inmates.

In addition, several systemic problems contributing to the state's classification problems were identified, along with recommendations for addressing them. Officials sought to improve the systemic issues pertaining to staff shortages and training prior to a full implementation of the modified system.

Idaho Department of Correction

At the start of the technical assistance initiative, the Idaho Department of Correction (ID DOC) maintained two correctional facilities for women and housed an additional 52 women at local jail facilities and 120 women out of state in contract beds. The primary facility, Pocatello Women's Correctional Center, housed about 266 inmates, and another 38 resided at the East Boise Community Work Center. However, during the course of the project, all out-of-state women were transferred back to an ID DOC facility. Idaho is one of four states that have separate classification systems for men and women offenders.

The primary concern that prompted the ID DOC to request technical assistance was that the system appeared to overclassify the women, placing them in more restrictive housing units than required given their level of threat to the safety and security of the facility and the public. The classification system had not been revalidated for the female inmate population since its design and implementation in the early 1990s. Because the female inmate population had grown substantially since the design and initial testing of the system, the ID DOC suspected that the system might not be appropriate for the current inmate population. Initial onsite meetings with staff and a review of the classification instruments and manual suggested that the poor quality of the classification manual contributed to inconsistencies in scoring the instruments among staff who completed the instruments. These factors reduced the classification and security staffs' confidence in the system.

In Hawaii, modified instruments proved to be more valid than the original instruments. In addition, the new instruments showed that it would be possible to reduce the custody level for approximately 10 percent of the research sample.

Idaho's classification system identified distinct custody levels among women offenders that were correlated with institutional adjustment.

The technical assistance entailed a validation study of the current classification, development of a new classification manual, and modification of the initial and reclassification score sheets. On completion of the project, the classification system identified distinct custody levels among women offenders that were correlated with institutional adjustment. Staff were trained on the use of the modified instruments and the system was implemented in September 2001.

Nebraska Department of Corrections

Over the course of technical assistance to the Nebraska Department of Corrections (NE DOC), the women offender population in its single facility changed from 250 to 180 and back to 250. Like Colorado and Hawaii, the NE DOC struggled with overclassification and restrictions that kept women from progressing to community custody.

This was primarily because at least 90 percent of women offenders were released within 12 months of their admission, while the state's custody classification system was designed for longer prison terms. Overclassification in the context of such short sentences usually resulted in overrides of classification scores and more releases from minimum custody and higher, rather than from community custody. Community settings for women were underused. Additional sources of overclassification included mandatory program requirements that could not be met by existing program resources and requirements that parole violators (30 percent of all admissions) be classified at medium custody without sufficient time remaining on their prison term to be reclassified.

The existing NE DOC custody classification system had been developed in-house and had not been validated for either its male or its female inmate population. Preliminary analyses suggested that the system was invalid for women offenders. As in many states, Nebraska's custody instrument was not used to make decisions regarding institutional assignment, housing, or privileges for women offenders. NE DOC staff reported that the custody classification system was used primarily to inform community release decisions, work furloughs, and use of restraints for inmates leaving the secure perimeter. Such decisions, however, were community issues rather than prison management issues.

A classification grid that jointly considered community risk (as measured by the LSI-R total score) and institutional risk (as measured by a modified version of the NIC custody model) was recommended. The grid was designed to place long-term inmates in minimum or medium custody, triage offenders into more detailed assessments and programs according to needs, and inform community-based placement and work assignments.

Use of a dynamic risk-needs assessment seemed well suited to NE DOC women offenders because—

- ◆ Most of their classification issues were related to community risk rather than to institutional risk. Traditional custody instruments are not appropriate for predicting community recidivism.
- ◆ Dynamic risk-needs assessments often predict prison misconduct and therefore are relevant to institutional custody issues.
- ◆ The NE DOC needed a dynamic risk-needs instrument to triage women into more detailed assessments and programming. Their current one-size-fits-all approach to assessment and programming was time consuming and contributed to overclassification.

This project experienced a number of starts and stops. Early on, the classification steering committee requested additional time to study the legal merits of having different systems for men and women. In addition, revisions to the custody instrument were halted because the state planned to revise both the men's and the women's custody models.

As a result, technical assistance involved LSI-R training for case management staff who work with women offenders and testing the validity of the LSI-R for predicting institutional misconduct. Even though this left the issue of the custody instrument for another day, the LSI-R results suggested that the use of mandatory programming and detailed assessments could be substantially reduced. The results also identified a group of inmates (at least 13 percent, probably higher) who were most appropriate for community settings. In addition, the LSI-R was modestly predictive of serious prison misconduct and days in segregation. However, the validation results were adversely affected by an excessive delay between staff training and actual use of the LSI-R and rushed interviews (and errors). Excessive citations for minor misconducts also adversely affected the predictive validity of the LSI-R (as they do in other validation studies) because the behavior at issue is as reflective of the staff's supervision style as it is of the inmates' behaviors. This, in turn, misrepresents the relationship between inmate characteristics and inmate behavior.

West Virginia Department of Corrections

The West Virginia Department of Corrections (WV DOC) was concerned that its existing classification system overclassified women offenders and did not provide quality information for programming or housing assignments.

A validation of the current classification system for women offenders was undertaken. In addition, some of the criminal history and institutional adjustment risk factors were modified in an attempt to better assess the behavior and risk factors of women offenders. These analyses suggested that dynamic risk factors were consistently better predictors of women's institutional adjustment than traditional criminal history factors. The analyses also suggested potential modifications to risk factors

Dynamic risk-needs assessments often predict prison misconduct and therefore are relevant to institutional custody issues.

A system combining dynamic risk factors with traditional static risk factors would dramatically improve the validity of the classification system.

to improve their predictive power. However, simply tinkering with criminal history factors did not address the problems associated with the overall classification system. One of the most problematic findings was that the public risk scale was the primary determinant of the custody level for most inmates, yet it was not a valid or reliable predictor of institutional adjustment.

On consideration of these findings, a full redesign of the classification system for both male and female WV DOC prisoners was recommended. It appeared that a system combining dynamic risk factors with traditional static risk factors (such as current offense and escape history) would dramatically improve the validity of the classification system.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) requested technical assistance to assess its classification processes for women offenders and obtain feedback and recommendations regarding its plans to develop a gender-specific classification system. As part of its planning process, the WI Bureau of Classification and Movement sought feedback to ensure the system had been fully assessed and that the most recent research and perspectives concerning the classification of women offenders were included in its plan.

A comprehensive onsite assessment was conducted, including interviews with central office and facility-based staff, tours of facilities that house women offenders, observation of initial classification staffing and program review committee hearings, and review of case files, the agency plan, written policies, classification instruments, and needs assessment instruments. In addition, briefing papers and a previous report of the validity of the existing classification system were reviewed. The assessment clearly indicated that the agency plan was a realistic examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the classification process. Overall, the objectives and recommendations outlined in the agency plan were on target and, if fulfilled, would provide high-quality management of the risks and needs presented by the WI DOC women offender population. Based on current research and the experiences of other states, observations and suggestions were provided to strengthen the agency plan.

four

CHAPTER

Building Blocks to Effective Classification of Women Offenders

Several themes and concerns surfaced consistently in the literature, during the national assessment, and throughout the technical assistance work with the seven states. These concerns are prioritized below according to their potential impact on the classification of women offenders. The recommendations emerging from these concerns, also discussed below, will contribute to sound, comprehensive classification models for women offenders.

Validity of the Custody Classification Systems

Recommendation 1: Ensure the Validity of Classification Systems for Women Offenders

Agencies need to devote more intensive efforts toward validating their classification systems for women offenders. The current data suggest that approximately 30 states do not know whether their custody classification systems are valid because they have not conducted separate validation studies with samples of women offenders. Underscoring this concern is the fact that validation studies typically find that existing systems are invalid for women. In such systems, assignment to a custody level (e.g., maximum, close, medium, or minimum) is not based on risk factors related to prison adjustment or to the women's threat to the safety and security of the institution. Often, misconduct rates are not different across the custody levels. In such situations, then, how can anyone justify housing women at custody levels that affect the austerity of their environment, their privileges, or their right to work outside of prison perimeters?

The ethical concerns are obvious. Is it ethical, for example, to place a woman in maximum custody, thus restricting her access to preferred work assignments, programs, and other privileges if she is no greater threat to the safety and security of the facility than a woman placed in medium or minimum custody? Is it ethical to use classification instruments for a population on which they have not been validated (American Association of Correctional Psychologists Standards Committee, 2000; American Psychological Association, 1992)? The obvious response is that classification systems should be valid for women offenders and that validation studies should be specific to women offenders.

Is it ethical to use classification instruments with a population on which they have not been validated?

Recommendation 2: Avoid Overclassifying Women Offenders

Overclassification of women offenders was a common complaint regarding existing custody classification systems for women. Within virtually every jurisdiction that was provided technical assistance, staff repeatedly expressed concerns about the overclassification of women offenders. These observations were supported by empirical analyses conducted for the respective jurisdictions.

Overclassification occurs when—

- ◆ The classification system is invalid.
- ◆ Other systemic and organizational factors place women in custody levels higher than their behavior warrants (e.g., when women are retained in medium custody because of a detainer or pending case, regardless of the severity of the pending charges).
- ◆ Correctional administrators fail to recognize that women are less dangerous than men even when their custody classifications are the same.

Modifications to classification systems conducted throughout the course of the cooperative agreements reduced overclassification to some extent. Validations of the modified systems, however, seldom resulted in classification reductions for more than 10 percent of the sample or population. Further shifts in the custody distributions—by either modifying the custody scale points or changing the weights or scores for key risk factors—were not possible, primarily due to mandatory restrictions or departmental directives. Moreover, modifications to the custody scale cutpoints could occur only if the systems remained valid after doing so. Often they did not.

Addressing overclassification requires that agency officials also reconsider systemic factors that contribute to it, such as the following:

- ◆ Staff who are not trained to manage women offenders and use excessive disciplinary citations as a management tool.
- ◆ Program and other mandates that keep women at certain custody levels until scarce programs become available.
- ◆ Nondiscretionary overrides pertaining to time-to-serve, minor escapes, and other factors that do not predict prison misconduct.

Recommendation 3: Modify Current Risk Factors and/or Scale Cutpoints To Reflect Differences Between Women and Men

Modifying risk factors and/or scale cutpoints is a common strategy employed by systems that have undertaken a validation study and found statistically significant differences in the predictive power of the risk factors for their men and women

Staff who are not trained to manage women offenders use excessive disciplinary citations as a management tool.

offenders (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Delaware, New York, and Oklahoma). Across jurisdictions, the research has been inconsistent regarding the success of enhancing the validity of the classification system by simply revising the current custody assessment instruments. Thus, any and all changes must be validated before any modification of the classification system.

The most common gender-specific risk factors were age, criminal history, severity of the current offense, and stability.

Age. Several states (e.g., Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming) observed that the relationship between age and institutional adjustment differed for men and women offenders. Among a sample of women offenders, the Colorado validation study also found a need to modify age categories. The most common pattern observed is that the rate of institutional infractions decreased at an earlier age for men than women; that is, male inmates “burned out” in their mid- to upper 30s, while women offenders continued to have high rates of infractions in their mid- to late 40s.

Most validation studies have found age to be a statistically significant predictor of institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders; however, behavior patterns vary by gender. As a result, different age categories for men and women offenders should improve the predictive power of the instruments.

Criminal history. Several researchers have observed differences between men and women offenders in the pathways leading to involvement in the criminal justice system. Specifically, differences in the number and type of crimes for which men and women offenders are convicted and incarcerated have been noted (Owens and Bloom, 2001). The primary question considered for the design and validation of a classification system is what difference, if any, do these patterns have on the determination of the appropriate custody level for women offenders? The data have been rather mixed in that some studies have shown criminal history risk factors to have about the same predictive power for men and women offenders, while others have suggested that the severity of prior convictions is a stronger predictor for men than women. Other validation studies have found that criminal history factors are poor predictors of institutional adjustment, particularly at reclassification for both men and women.

In these validation studies, the predictive power of criminal history also varied according to its operational definition. Items that considered the number of prior felony convictions or incarcerations had poor predictive power. In some states, however, the severity of prior convictions was statistically correlated with institutional adjustment. Pilot testing alternative operational definitions for criminal history remains the most useful strategy for developing a valid and reliable risk factor for women offenders. Idaho, for example, completely revised its criminal history risk factor on the initial classification instrument and deleted it from the reclassification instrument based on analyses of women’s history and institutional adjustment. In other states, reducing the weights of the prior history variables was helpful.

The rate of institutional infractions decreased at an earlier age for men than women.

Severity of the current offense. Modifications of the current offense risk factor were among the first gender-specific changes to classification systems. New York has scored the severity of the current offense differently for men and women offenders since the 1980s. In the New York system, points for a woman who kills an abuser in self-defense are lower than for other women convicted of murder.

The common argument for assigning different weights to the current offense for women offenders typically cites differences in their offense patterns relative to men. Violent crimes among women are often among family members or within the context of personal relationships. For victimized women, these crimes can also occur in self-defense. As a result, women offenders are seen as less predatory and thus as posing less of a security risk than male offenders.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to test these assertions in the context of classification research. Prison files often provided insufficient details about the nature of the current offense (whether it was in self-defense or perpetrated against a known victim). Moreover, few women are incarcerated for violent crimes and testing the importance of types of violence would require inordinately large samples. The Colorado and Hawaii studies, for example, attempted to determine whether women who killed an abuser in self-defense were less disruptive than other violent offenders. Too few women fit this description to support tests conducted on samples of 100 to 150 inmates. However, none of these women were observed on followup to have a misconduct record of any kind.

In another examination of the effect on offender behavior of type of violence committed, an Oklahoma study found that women incarcerated for some street crimes (e.g., robbery, aggravated assault, and weapons offenses) had higher rates of institutional infractions than those incarcerated for other violent offenses (e.g., murder, rape, and kidnap).

More generally, most of the studies found that women offenders convicted of violent crimes tended to have higher rates of disciplinary infractions than women convicted of nonviolent crimes. These relationships did not always achieve statistical significance, however. Even when the tests were significant, the studies found very few women with high scores on criminal history factors. With respect to violent offenses, the variable affected relatively few classifications.

The Oklahoma validation study also sought to examine the importance of additional offense-related factors, including the relationship between the victim and offender, the role of substance abuse in the offense, and the relationship between the offender and her codefendant (Hardyman and Tulloch, 2000). In contrast to the hypothesis, the type of victim (child, familiar adult, acquaintance, or stranger) was not statistically related to the rate of institutional infractions. Women whose victim was their spouse, partner, or child had slightly higher rates of institutional infractions than women incarcerated for crimes against strangers. However, these differences were not statistically significant. As expected, women incarcerated for victimless crimes (e.g., drug-related, property) had statistically fewer infractions.

Women incarcerated for some street crimes had higher rates of institutional infractions than those incarcerated for other violent offenses.

Finally, women who were involved with a male codefendant or family member had the highest rates of institutional infractions. This suggested that women who were involved with negative peers in the community were likely to be more aggressive and disruptive within the institution than women who did not have a codefendant. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

Because of the small numbers of cases for which these data were available, the findings were inconclusive and did not support modification of the operational definitions for rating the severity of the current offense among women offenders. The only consistent observation across multiple states was that women offenders incarcerated for violent offenses tend to have higher rates of disciplinary infractions than those incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. Differentiation among types of violent crimes has been inconclusive because of the small number of cases.

Stability factors. Many states include various indicators of offender stability on initial classification instruments and dynamic risk factors on reclassification instruments. The most common initial classification stability factors include employment at the time of arrest, education, and substance abuse. Familiar dynamic reclassification risk factors (i.e., factors that can change throughout an inmate's incarceration) include institutional behavior and participation in institutional programming and treatment. Age is frequently used at initial classification as a stability factor and then on the reclassification instrument as a dynamic factor. Analyses of the relationship between these factors and institutional adjustment begin to identify ways to make classification systems more gender specific, especially when dynamic factors pertaining to employment, substance abuse, mental health, and family issues are considered. Although the results have been inconsistent across the states, it is clear that these factors require special consideration when attempting to refine the classification instruments to respond appropriately to each gender.

Women whose primary role was homemaking or providing childcare at the time of arrest, for example, had rates of institutional infractions comparable to those with full-time employment. This supported the inclusion of childcare and homemaker roles in the operational definition of employment as an indicator of community stability. Similar findings were observed in validation studies for states that were not included in the current cooperative agreements (Hardyman and Davies, 2001a).

Education appeared to be an indicator of stability among men but not women offenders. Male inmates with at least a high school or general equivalency diploma had lower rates of institutional misconduct than men who did not have a high school education. In contrast, women offenders with a high school or general equivalency diploma had higher rates of institutional misconduct than those who did not. Thus, educational achievement appears to have a different relationship to institutional adjustment for men and women offenders. When including educational achievement on classification instruments, operational definitions and weights should be tailored to accurately reflect the behavior of the men and women offenders. Alternatively, the variable could be eliminated from a gender-specific instrument for women.

Education appeared to be an indicator of stability among men but not women offenders.

The use of substance abuse as a stability factor may be problematic. The measure yielded mixed results in the current research. The reliability and validity of this factor are often questionable because operational definitions allow for subjective bias and interpretation as to what constitutes substance abuse. Some staff consider any use of illicit substances, for example, an indication of substance abuse because it is a criminal offense, whereas for others substance abuse is defined as the involvement of illicit substances and/or alcohol in the current offense or daily use of these substances. Information needed to score an item may be marred by the biases of the pre-sentence report writer and the inmate's self-report. Demographic and need data compiled as part of the classification validation initiatives suggested that 75 to 80 percent of the women offenders had substance abuse problems. Even if problems associated with subjectivity and interpretation were resolved, the pervasiveness of the problem among women offenders sometimes rendered the item useless for custody assessment purposes.

As previously noted, the most common institutional risk factors identified by correctional staff working with women offenders pertained to relationships (both institutional and community) and mental health. Unfortunately, information pertaining to relationships often is not contained in inmates' files and, therefore, it is difficult to develop reliable and valid measures of this factor. Changes in inmates' relationships throughout the term of incarceration also may affect the reliability and validity of measures pertaining to women's relationships while incarcerated.

Preliminary tests of risk factors pertaining to child welfare, intimate relationships, and family relationships indicated these factors were unreliable and were not correlated consistently with institutional adjustment among women offenders in Florida (Hardyman, 2000; Hardyman and Davies, 2001b). Data from West Virginia, however, indicated that institutional relationships were a valid predictor of misconduct (i.e., women for whom institutional relationships were a stress factor had higher rates of institutional infractions). Children and legal issues, individually, were not directly correlated with institutional adjustment, although the presence of multiple stress factors was highly correlated with institutional adjustment. This suggested that women's experiences both inside and outside the prison impacted on their institutional adjustment.

The Colorado study measured relationships, mental health, substance abuse, self-esteem, self-efficacy, parenting, child abuse, and adult victimization using established scales in some instances and constructed but validated scales in other instances. The relationships variable in this study was operationalized as codependency, or a tendency to lose too much personal power in intimate relationships. At prison intake, four variables—relationships, mental health, child abuse,⁶ and substance abuse—were strongly related to prison misconduct.

This strategy was also tested by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. An institutional stability item that considered inmates' emotional stability and need for medical, mental health, and substance abuse services was developed based on the need areas correctional staff most frequently cited as critical to women's adjustment to

The presence of multiple stress factors was highly correlated with institutional adjustment.

institutional life.⁷ The data suggested that stability was an important factor for women's initial adjustment but was not statistically correlated with long-term institutional adjustment. This finding contradicted the observations of correctional staff.

Although the inconsistencies in the relationships among these dynamic factors and institutional adjustment throughout women's incarceration sometimes were contrary to the researchers' stated hypothesis, the finding that these factors are more important at initial classification is logical. An alternative explanation is that as women are institutionalized longer, their behaviors are affected more by the day-to-day relationships and activities in the institution than by noninstitutional influences, relationships, and concerns. However, as observed by institutional staff, these factors are very dynamic and, therefore, their ability to predict behavior over a 6- to 12-month period may be diminished. As an alternative, reclassification systems should reassess these factors, thereby accommodating stabilization of mental health and substance abuse, educational accomplishments, and other changes. Clearly, as classification or custody reclassification risk factors, they require and merit further research.

Gender-Specific Needs Assessments

Recommendation 4: Develop Comprehensive Classification Systems That Assign Women to Meaningful Programs

Longstanding correctional standards maintain that offenders should be classified according to needs related to prison adjustment, institutional safety, recidivism, and reentry to the community (Clements, McKee, and Jones, 1984). Comprehensive needs assessments should consider both the presence and the intensity of the need. Such screening tools are intended to identify potential problems and triage individuals for more detailed assessments.

Just the same, needs assessments (or screening tools) are not intended to replace the more detailed test batteries and other needs-specific assessment protocols from which diagnoses and formal treatment plans can be developed. A formal, detailed assessment that includes an interview with the offender and a thorough review of historical information from which a diagnosis is derived and recommendations for treatment services are then developed is particularly important when evaluating substance abuse, health, mental health, and educational problems.

Although needs assessments are not new to corrections, clear changes in the nature and size of prison populations now place more urgent demands on systems to adopt appropriate assessments and sound programming. Prison populations have changed as a result of the war on drugs and an increase in the number of dual-diagnosed and mentally ill inmates (Austin et al., 2000). The growth in the proportion of troubled inmates has been greater for women than for men (Owens and Bloom, 2001). Emerging interest in prisoner reentry initiatives and gender-responsive programming creates additional demands for valid and reliable needs assessments.

The growth in the proportion of troubled inmates has been greater for women than for men.

Assessments should specify objective criteria, require documentation, and oblige raters to indicate how many domains of a problem exist rather than ask for judgment calls about the intensity of a problem.

Officials are well advised to track needs and use the changing information.

Recommendation 5: Develop Objective and Reliable Needs Assessment Processes

Asking classification staff to differentiate between, for example, substance abuse that substantially interferes with functioning and substance abuse that severely disrupts functioning invites unreliable responses. Assessments should specify objective criteria, require documentation, and oblige raters to indicate how many domains of a problem exist (e.g., does substance abuse affect work, family relationships, and/or medical problems) rather than ask for judgment calls about the intensity of a problem. More confidence can be placed in assessments that incorporate the results of needs-specific assessments using established mental health, substance abuse, and educational tests. Simply put, needs should not be determined by checklists that reflect the subjective impressions of a nonclinical rater.

The first criterion for a valid classification system is reliability. To accurately assess the needs or risks of a population, both inter- and intra-rater reliability are essential. Inter-rater reliability is present, for example, when two caseworkers assessing the same offender generate the same rating or score. Intra-rater reliability implies that if a caseworker rates an offender today, he or she will score the offender the same way this afternoon or tomorrow if there are no significant changes in the presenting problems or needs. Mood, fatigue, an unrelated event, the amount of coffee consumed, and other such factors should not substantially alter the caseworker's assessment of the problem.

Notwithstanding requirements for consistent ratings within short spans of time, needs should be reassessed over longer time spans. Many needs are dynamic, changing over time and are successfully addressed by prison programming or medical services. Often, successfully addressed needs also translate into less prison disruption and reduced recidivism. Officials are well advised to track needs and use the changing information.

Recommendation 6: Focus on Criminogenic Needs To Increase the Utility of Needs Assessments

Dynamic criminogenic needs have been statistically correlated with criminal behavior and prison misconduct. Therefore, successfully treating dynamic criminogenic needs can reduce criminal behavior and prison misconduct. Agencies wishing to prevent future offending should focus on the problems associated with future offending (Andrews and Bonta, 1998).

However, the research on this issue leaves some questions unanswered with respect to women offenders. Some studies have found that criminogenic needs are the same for men and women, while other studies have suggested that only some criminogenic needs are the same for men and women and that the respective needs have different roles and predictive powers for men and women. Still other studies suggest that needs assessments for women offenders should consider additional, more gender-responsive needs, such as relationships, child abuse, adult victimization, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and parenting. Therefore, to ensure the utility of the needs

assessments and avoid the pitfalls of using assessment instruments that are not designed and constructed for women offenders, agencies should validate any commercial needs assessment instrument prior to its full implementation to ensure its reliability and validity for the women incarcerated in their institutions.

Recommendation 7: Include Gender-Specific Needs in Screening and Assessment Tools

In addition to the considerations raised in recommendation 6, agencies should examine and test needs assessments for the presence of needs pertaining to abuse, parenting, relationships, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Most of the current assessments used by correctional agencies ignore these important needs of women offenders. The national assessment found 92 percent of the respondents indicated that women and men had different needs patterns yet only eight states indicated any unique provisions for assessing these gender-specific needs. Literature reviews, survey respondents, focus group participants (with inmates, line staff, and administrators) identified the following needs as being more characteristic of women than men: dealing with abuse/trauma, relationships, parenting skills, self-efficacy, housing, health, mental health, and self-esteem. Some of these needs (e.g., child abuse, relationships, and mental health) were correlated with prison adjustment.

Agencies should validate any commercial needs assessment instrument prior to its full implementation to ensure its reliability and validity for the women incarcerated in their institutions.

Agencies should examine and test needs assessments for the presence of needs pertaining to abuse, parenting, relationships, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Addressing Classification Issues That Require Systemic Change

The classification initiatives undertaken by the seven states that received technical assistance from NIC were similar in that each state struggled with how to best assess the risks and needs posed by women offenders in order to place them in the least restrictive environment and to provide relevant programming. The initiatives began with the assumptions that the institutional behavior of women offenders differed from that of male offenders and that a different set of risk factors and/or classification processes were required to manage this population efficiently and effectively. Many states were concerned that the traditional systems modeled after the behavior of male inmates were insufficient and counterproductive. The building blocks of classification described above are just that—building blocks. Much is still to be explored and learned regarding the classification and assessment of women offenders.

Some very important lessons were learned about systemic issues that can render even the most valid and comprehensive classification system ineffective. The following issues, although not directly related to classification, were the most prevalent systemic issues that affected the classification of women prisoners.

Inadequate Institutional Disciplinary Systems

Imprecise institutional discipline codes and policies often prevent inmates with minor and old infractions from progressing to lower custody levels. Inadequate disciplinary codes are a primary contributor to the overclassification of women offenders because of differences in the institutional behaviors of men and women. Sometimes institutional infractions with very different threats to the safety and security of the institution are combined and assigned identical codes. All assaults, for example, regardless of the intent of the assailant, degree of injury, and nature of the offense are coded as assaults. Thus, sexual assaults, aggravated assaults that require hospitalization of the victim, and simple assaults with no injury are not differentiated. For classification purposes, the disciplinary policy should be revised to ensure that infraction codes are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. This would make possible automatic scoring of the institutional disciplinary history (thus eliminating mathematical errors and increasing reliability), avoid the need for subjective assessments of the severity of assaults by case workers, and facilitate the use of different weights and timeframes according to the severity of the misconduct and the threat to the safety and security of the institution.

Sometimes institutional infractions with very different threats to the safety and security of the institution are combined and assigned identical codes.

Location of Correctional Institutions for Women

Most state correctional systems have very few correctional facilities for women offenders. Frequently these facilities are located in rural areas, far from the urban communities in which most of the women lived prior to their incarceration and to which they will return. This distance creates barriers to family visitations, work and educational opportunities, and access to medical and mental health services. The rural setting sometimes creates cultural barriers within the facility if local staff are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the social norms and experiences of urban women. These problems exacerbate the disciplinary problems, if not properly addressed, because women's institutional adjustment is often influenced by relationships within and outside the facility, concerns for children, and other stress factors.

Management of Women Offenders

One of the most troubling observations was the minimal training provided to staff who are working with women offenders. In most state correctional agencies, basic training for correctional officers and caseworkers neglects any focus on women offenders.⁸ Although the staff were clearly dedicated and skilled, they almost universally reported that they did not receive any specialized or gender-specific training for working with women offenders. Their skills had been developed through years of on-the-job training. Many had resisted working in the women's facility and had originally seen the job assignment as a second-tier position or steppingstone to a more coveted position. Thus, recognition of the needs of the women offenders and strategies for managing their institutional behavior had to be rediscovered by each staff member. Inexperienced staff were often quick to write up women for disobedience of a direct order, disrespect to staff, disorderly conduct, yelling, and unauthorized possession of property. Although these are relatively minor incidents, multiple infractions of this nature could quickly elevate a woman to medium or close custody.

Lack of Programming

In addition to the concerns about the absence or inadequacy of gender-responsive programming, many correctional systems are hampered by the lack of resources for any type of programming. Long waiting lists for substance abuse, academic, and vocational programs were common complaints among state correctional staff. Correctional programming for both men and women suffered tremendous cutbacks under the "get tough on crime" sentiments of the 1980s and 1990s. The current interest in reentry and transition to the community has created an opportunity to rebuild some of the programming. However, budget deficits and cutbacks faced by many states have prevented or delayed programming efforts. Thus, even if a state has an objective, gender-specific needs screening and assessment process, without programs in which to place the women, the assessment becomes a meaningless exercise.

In most state correctional agencies, basic training for correctional officers and caseworkers neglects any focus on women offenders.

Addressing Classification Issues That Require Systemic Change

These problems also contribute to overclassification for two reasons. First, participation in work and programs often translates into more successful prison adjustment and lower reclassification scores. Second, in some jurisdictions, participation in recommended programs is a prerequisite for reducing classification. Therefore, inmates who cannot participate in program requirements because programs are unavailable may be held at higher custody levels regardless of the adequacy of the classification system.

Future Steps

The call for more data and more research is a common theme among researchers. Thus, the suggestion for continued work to validate classification systems, test alternative risk factors, and develop objective, gender-specific needs assessment processes to make systems more gender responsive appears to be obvious. Yet requests from state and local correctional systems to assess and fine-tune their classification systems confirm the need to continue the research. In addition, the research described in this report needs to be replicated in other jurisdictions before any further generalizations or conclusions can be made. NIC has long advocated for the validation of any classification system for the population to which it is applied. The inconsistencies in the risk factors observed thus far suggest that much is still to be learned about the classification of women offenders. At the same time, the number of women offenders under correctional supervision continues to grow while resources decline. The need to develop valid and reliable risk and needs assessment systems for managing and serving the prison population with fewer resources becomes more critical each year.

Future efforts should focus on helping agencies develop systems that are both practical and feasible given these harsh realities. Just as researchers dependably call for more research, correctional administrators are consistently asked to do more with less. Scarce resources should provide maximum returns, and, therefore, future initiatives should concentrate on models that require reasonable efforts in terms of training, staffing, validation, and implementation. New lessons will be learned with these initiatives, and previous lessons will be further refined. If the classification system is to continue to serve as the brain of the correctional system, it must be responsive to risks and needs posed by women as well as men. Unfortunately, there is still much to discover about how to make systems more gender specific.

If the classification system is to continue to serve as the brain of the correctional system, it must be responsive to risks and needs posed by women as well as men.

Notes

1. Burke and Adams (1991) attach a legal analysis conducted by Nicholas and Loeb (1991) that effectively dispels these concerns. See Brennan, 1998; Burke and Adams, 1991; and Stanko, 1997.
2. For a more detailed description of the national assessment and its findings, see Van Voorhis and Presser, 2001.
3. Unfortunately, combined validation samples are inadequate for women offenders if they contain much fewer women than men. In such cases, the statistics measure the power of the risk factor for the majority of the sample—i.e., the men.
4. In the time since the survey was conducted, these same two states have returned again to separate systems for men and women.
5. Of the gender-responsive needs, mental health, relationships, and child abuse were found to be strongly correlated with prison misconduct. Although the classification steering committee did not recommend including child abuse in a custody instrument, it was, however, included in the needs assessment for model 3.
6. Child abuse was not recommended for inclusion on the custody instrument, however.
7. One variation of the stability factor included substance abuse, emotional stability, mental health, sex offender status, and reintegration needs. However, this variation was not statistically correlated with institutional adjustment.
8. The National Institute of Corrections provides training on women offender issues as a part of its curriculum offerings on agency planning, operational practices, sexual misconduct, and classification. However, because of limitations on class size, only a small percentage of the personnel who work at women's correctional facilities have an opportunity to attend. In addition, because of the nature of the training—operational practices and agency planning—the sessions are limited to more experienced staff.

References

Adams, L., and J. Henning. 1982. "Illinois Adult Classification System Design." In *Classification as a Management Tool: Theories and Models for Decision-Makers*. Ed. American Correctional Association. College Park, MD: American Correctional Association.

Alexander, J., and E. Humphrey. 1988. "Initial Security Classification Guidelines for Females: Working Paper XVI." Albany: New York State Department of Correctional Services.

American Association of Correctional Psychologists Standards Committee. 2000. "Standards for Psychology Services in Jails, Prisons, and Correctional Facilities and Agencies," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 27 (4): 433–493.

American Psychological Association. 1992. "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct." *American Psychologist* 47 (12): 1597–1611.

Andrews, D., and J. Bonta. 1995. *The Level of Supervision Inventory–Revised (LSI–R)*. North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems.

———. 1998. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. 2nd ed., Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

Andrews, D., J. Bonta, and R. Hoge. 1990. "Classification for Effective Rehabilitation: Rediscovering Psychology." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 17 (1): 19–52.

Arnstein, P., E. Buselli, and S. Rankin. 1996. "Women and Heart Attacks: Prevention, Diagnosis, and Care." *Nurse Practitioner* 21 (5): 57–69.

Austin, J., M. Bruce, L. Carroll, P. McCall, and S. Richards. 2000. "The Use of Incarceration in the United States: A Policy Paper Presented by the National Policy Committee to the American Society of Criminology." Columbus, OH: American Society of Criminology.

Austin, J., L. Chan, and W. Elms. 1993. *Indiana Department of Corrections: Women Classification Study*. San Francisco, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Balthazar, M., and R. Cook. 1984. "An Analysis of the Factors Related to the Rate of Violent Crimes Committed by Incarcerated Female Delinquents." In *Gender Issues, Sex Offenses, and Criminal Justice: Current Trends*. Ed. S. Chaneles. New York: Haywarth Press: 103–118.

Belknap, J., K. Holsinger, and M. Dunn. 1998. "Understanding Incarcerated Girls: The Results of a Focus Group Study." *Prison Journal* 77 (4): 381–404.

References

- Bloom, B., and B. Owen. 2004. *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research Practice and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Bonta, J., B. Pang, and S. Wallace-Capretta. 1995. "Predictors of Recidivism Among Incarcerated Female Offenders." *The Prison Journal* 75 (3): 277–294.
- Bowker, L. 1981. "Gender Differences in Prison Subcultures." In *Women and Crime in America*. Ed. L. Bowker. New York: Macmillan.
- Brennan, T. 1998. "Institutional Classification of Females: Problems and Some Proposals for Reform." In *Female Crime and Delinquency: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions*. Ed. R. Zaplin. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishing, Inc.: 179–204.
- Burke, P., and L. Adams. 1991. *Classification of Women Offenders in State Correctional Facilities: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Clear, T. 1988. "Statistical Prediction in Corrections." *Research in Corrections* 1 (1): 1–39.
- Clements, C., J. McKee, and S. Jones. 1984. *Offender Needs Assessments: Models and Approaches*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Covington, S. 1998. "The Relational Theory of Women's Psychological Development: Implications for the Criminal Justice System." In *Female Crime and Delinquency: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions*. Ed. R. Zaplin. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishing, Inc.: 113–131.
- Dembo, R., L. Williams, W. Wothke, J. Schmeidler, and R. Brown. 1992. "The Generality of Deviance Replication of a Structural Model Among High-Risk Youth." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 29 (2): 200–216.
- Dobash, R.P., R.E. Dobash, and S. Gutteridge. 1986. *The Imprisonment of Women*. Totowa, NJ: Blackwell.
- Erez, E. 1988. "Myth of the New Female Offender: Some Evidence from Attitudes Toward Law and Justice." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 16 (6): 499–509.
- Forcier, M. 1995. *Massachusetts Department of Correction Female Offender Objective Classification Technical Assistance Project: Final Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- General Accounting Office. 1999. *Women in Prison: Issues and Challenges Confronting U.S. Correctional Systems*. Washington, DC: General Accounting Office. GAO/GGD-00-22.

Gilligan, C. 1993. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hardyman, P.L. 1999. *Wyoming Department of Corrections Prison Objective Classification System: Final Report on 1999 Revalidation Effort*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

———. 2000. *Assessment of the Florida Department of Corrections Risk and Needs System: An Ambitious Internal Classification Design and Implementation Effort*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., and G. Davies. 2001a. *Revalidation of the Kentucky Department of Correction Objective Classification System: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

———. 2001b. *Validation of the Florida Department of Corrections Objective Classification System: Draft Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., and O.C. Tulloch. 2000. *Validation of the Oklahoma Department of Correction Objective Classification System for the Female Inmate Population: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Harrison, P., and A.J. Beck. 2002. *Prisoners in 2001*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 195189.

Holsinger, K. 1999. "Addressing the Distinct Experience of the Adolescent Female: Explaining Delinquency and Examining the Juvenile Justice System." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati.

Kruttschnitt, C., and S. Krmpotich. 1990. "Aggressive Behavior Among Women Offenders: An Exploratory Study." *Justice Quarterly* 7 (2): 371–389.

LIS, Inc. 1998. *Current Issues in the Operation of Women's Prisons*. Boulder, CO: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Lowenkamp, C.T., and E. Latessa. 2002. "Assessing Female Offenders: Prediction Versus Explanation." *Women, Girls, & Criminal Justice* 3 (4): 49–64.

Martin, R., P. Biswas, S. Freemantle, G. Pearce, and R. Mann. 1998. "Age and Sex Distribution of Suspected Adverse Drug Reaction to Newly Marketed Drugs in General Practice in England: Analysis of 48 Cohort Studies." *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 46 (5): 505–511.

References

- McClellan, D., D. Farabee, and B. Crouch. 1997. "Early Victimization, Drug Use, and Criminality." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 24 (4): 455–476.
- Miller, D., D. Trapani, K. Fejes-Mendoza, C. Eggleston, and R. Dwiggin. 1995. "Adolescent Female Offenders: Unique Considerations." *Adolescence* 30: 429–435.
- Morash, M.T., T. Bynum, and B. Koons. 1998. *Women Offenders: Programming Needs and Promising Approaches*. NIJ Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 171668.
- National Institute of Corrections. 1979. *Classification Instruments for Criminal Justice Decisions, Volume 3: Institutional Custody*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.
- Nicholas, S., and Loeb, A. 1991. Legal Analysis. In *Classification of Women Offenders in State Correctional Facilities: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Eds. P. Burke and L. Adams. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Owens, B., and B. Bloom. 2001. "Guiding Principles and Strategies Document," working draft for the National Institute of Corrections Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders Project. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.
- Rivera, B., and C. Widom. 1990. "Childhood Victimization and Violent Offending." *Violence and Victims* 5 (1): 19–35.
- Simourd, D., and D. Andrews. 1994. "Correlates of Delinquency: A Look at Gender Differences." *Forum on Corrections Research* 6 (1): 26–31.
- Snell, T., and D. Morton. 1994. *Women in Prison*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 145321.
- Stanko, E. 1997. "Safety Talk: Conceptualizing Women's Risk Assessment as a 'Technology of the Soul.'" *Theoretical Criminology* 1 (4): 479–499.
- Sternberg, R., and W. Williams. 1997. "Does the GRE Predict Meaningful Success in the Graduate Training of Psychologists?" *American Psychologist* 52 (6): 630–641.
- Taylor, J., C. Gilligan, and A. Sullivan. 1995. *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tischler, C., and J. Marquart. 1989. "Analysis of Disciplinary Infraction Rates Among Female and Male Inmates." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 17: 507–513.
- Van Voorhis, P. 1994. *Psychological Classification of the Adult Male Prison Inmate*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Developing Gender-Specific Classification Systems for Women Offenders

Van Voorhis, P., and K. Brown. 1996. *Risk Classification in the 1990s*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Van Voorhis, P., and L. Presser. 2001. *Classification of Women Offenders: A National Assessment of Current Practices*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Wanberg, K., and H. Milkman. 1998. *Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse Treatment: Strategies for Self-Improvement and Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Williams, T. 1981. "Sentencing Time in Corrections and Parole." In *Women in Prison: Michigan 1968–1978*. Eds. J. Figueira-McDonough, A. Inglehart, R. Sarri, and T. Williams. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan School of Social Work and the Institute for Social Research.

Appendix A: Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

Work completed as part of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) cooperative agreements with the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati and The Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections at The George Washington University is summarized in this appendix. More lengthy and detailed reports about each state have been submitted to NIC and the state's correctional agency.

Colorado Department of Corrections

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

In February 2000, the Colorado Department of Corrections (CO DOC) requested assistance to develop a classification system based on custody variables that were predictive for women offenders and assessed their gender-specific needs. Several classification-related issues prompted this request. First, like Hawaii and Nebraska, Colorado was experiencing problems with overclassification of women offenders and high rates of discretionary overrides. Second, women offenders appeared to be more troubled than men in a number of ways. Most notably, women were more likely (26 percent) than men (11 percent) to be diagnosed with mental illness. The current classification system did not provide quality information for management and programming decisions regarding these offenders. Third, the existing custody system did not appear relevant to women offenders, as certain variables (e.g., escapes and assaults) appeared to assess different behaviors for men and women. Finally, staff voiced concerns about the validity and reliability of both the needs and custody classification factors. The CO DOC classification system was based on the NIC Model Prisons approach. In the most recent validation study, Austin and associates (1995) recommended the development of a separate system for women offenders.

The steering committee preferred to develop a new classification model for women offenders rather than alter the current system because they wanted a system that would inform both custody and programming decisions. In doing so, the committee hoped to include both gender-responsive needs (e.g., relationships, parenting skills, child abuse, adult victimization, self-efficacy, and self-esteem) and the more commonly assessed needs (e.g., education, employment, mental health, and substance abuse). Given time limits associated with the cooperative agreement and the complexity of the data and design tasks for the gender-responsive needs assessment system, this project was limited to the design and validation of an initial classification instrument. The project included three phases:

- ◆ A qualitative review of the current system and recommendations for revision. This phase involved focus groups with inmates, custody staff, case management staff, and administrators from all three women's facilities; and work sessions with the steering committee to revise the current custody items, examine the current needs process, review new items developed by University of Cincinnati staff, and recommend changes to the initial and the reclassification instruments.

Like Hawaii and Nebraska, Colorado was experiencing problems with overclassification of women offenders and high rates of discretionary overrides.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

- ◆ Construction of gender-responsive scales pertaining to relationships, self-esteem, self-efficacy, adult victimization, and child abuse.
- ◆ Validation of the existing initial classification instrument and comparisons among three options for updating the system.

Phase I: Qualitative Review. The focus groups and working sessions of the steering committee generated numerous possible revisions to the current classification system. Proposed revisions included changing or reducing weights of history of institutional violence, escapes, and prior felony convictions; improving needs variables (e.g., substance abuse, education, and mental health); adding new gender-responsive variables (self-esteem, self-efficacy, relationships, parenting, and victimization);¹ changing weights associated with infractions on the reclassification instrument; and adding work and program incentives to the reclassification instrument.

Phase II: Construction of Needs Scales. CO DOC's automated information system greatly facilitated this phase. Most importantly, the system included LSI-R total and subscale scores and ratings (on a scale of 1 to 5) for substance abuse, mental health, violence potential, and sexual deviance. The substance abuse and mental health scales were critical for the analyses. Gender-responsive needs scales were constructed at the University of Cincinnati to assess relationships and parenting needs.² A literature review identified two scales that could be used in their current forms, the Rosenberg (1979) Self-Esteem Scale and the Sherer and Maddux Self-Efficacy Scale (Sherer et al., 1982). Child abuse and adult victimization scales consisted of a checklist of abusive behaviors (Campbell et al., 1994; Coleman, 1997; Holsinger, Belknap, and Sutherland, 1999; Murphy and Hoover, 1999; Rodenburg and Fantuzzo, 1993; Shephard and Campbell, 1992; Briere and Runtz, 1989). The final scales reflected the results of several construct validity and reliability tests and factor analysis for data reduction (Van Voorhis et al., 2001).

Phase III: Validation. Because the project included variables that were not available for the women, validation of the proposed system required a prospective study. CO DOC research and classification staff collected data for a cohort of 156 women offenders admitted to the CO DOC between October 10, 2000, and January 8, 2001. Within 30 days of admission, the women completed the needs assessment survey (containing the gender-responsive items) and the classification staff completed the revised initial classification. Electronic data files that included data pertaining to the women's current intake classification, LSI-R scores, CO DOC substance abuse and mental health scales, and social, demographic, and criminal history data were downloaded from the CO DOC information system. At a later point, data pertaining to the women's disciplinary infractions during the first 6 months of incarceration were downloaded from the system.

Validation Efforts and Key Results

The custody distribution from the existing classification system was as follows: minimum, 19 percent; minimum-restricted, 51 percent; medium, 29 percent; and close, 1 percent. This distribution differed from that observed for other recent validation studies for women offenders in that the proportion of CO DOC women classified as medium custody or above was high (Hardyman and Pearson, 2001). This suggested that the classification system being used was overclassifying the women. Further analyses indicated that the initial classification instrument was invalid for women offenders.

Modifications proposed by the steering committee offered only modest improvements to the predictive validity of the custody instrument; i.e., the predictive accuracy of age improved slightly. Even after reducing the scores for severity of current and number of prior convictions, these factors had negative relationships with prison misconduct. In contrast to other validation studies, modification of the escape factor to differentiate walkaways did not significantly improve its predictive power. Even with the modifications, only two factors (severity of prior felony convictions and history of institutional violence) had strong correlations with misconduct. Simply put, static custody variables were not impressive predictors of prison misconduct.

Offender needs, on the other hand, were stronger predictors of institutional adjustment. The following needs were correlated with prison adjustment: relationships, child abuse, mental health, substance abuse, and employment. Adult victimization was not related to institutional adjustment. A different set of needs was correlated with risk of future offending (as measured by the total LSI-R score): self-efficacy, self-esteem (to a very modest degree), relationships, troubled parenting, child abuse, mental health, substance abuse, education, and employment.

One of the most interesting findings was that the relationship of some gender-responsive needs to institutional adjustment was the opposite of that to risk of future offending. For example, women with favorable self-efficacy scores are more likely than women with low self-efficacy to incur prison misconduct. At the same time, women with high self-efficacy scored low risk on the LSI-R. Similarly, good parents adjusted poorly to prison but scored low risk on the LSI-R.

It is also noteworthy that LSI-R subscales for substance abuse and education/employment were more predictive of prison adjustment than existing CO DOC scales. The LSI-R emotional needs subscale was comparable to the CO DOC mental health scale.

Given the finding that needs, particularly gender-responsive needs, were more important than traditional custody variables when predicting misconduct among women offenders, the next task was to examine options for using this information for the initial classification decision. Three options predictive of prison adjustment were presented to the CO DOC:

The following needs were correlated with prison adjustment: relationships, child abuse, mental health, substance abuse, and employment.

Option 1: Modify the Current Intake Custody Classification System. Once the custody factors were modified, a valid custody system was developed. The classification factors included history of institutional violence, severity of the current conviction, severity of prior convictions, escape history, number of prior felonies, employment, substance abuse, parole eligibility date, and age. No gender-responsive variables were added to this model. This revised system was significantly related to all misconduct variables (overall, serious, and aggressive). Analyses of the option 1 custody distribution suggested that the modifications reduced overclassification and improved the validity of the system.

Option 2: Add Gender-Responsive Factors to the Modified Custody Classification System. A second option added two of the three needs related to prison misconduct among women offenders—mental health and relationships—to the modified custody classification system. (The child abuse variable was not added to this option.) The addition of these two needs enhanced the predictive validity of the option 1 custody instrument. Although custody distributions for the two options were virtually identical, option 2 more sharply differentiated each custody level in terms of prison adjustment. Therefore, the correlation between prison adjustment and custody level was considerably higher for option 2 than for option 1.

Option 2 posed a unique set of concerns. A state could be faulted for increasing a woman's restrictions or reducing her privileges according to problems over which she has no control, such as her mental health status or history of dysfunctional relationships. In contrast, the current practice of increasing custody according to one's behavior is far more defensible. (This was the rationale for not incorporating child abuse into option 2 even though the child abuse factor increased the predictive validity of the classification system.) A second concern was whether women would honestly report their needs or experiences if they knew that the information would raise their custody assignments.

One answer to the ethical considerations raised by option 2 is to restrict placement of inmates in close custody levels, except for extenuating behaviors. In this way, high-need inmates could not be placed in a custody situation that was more stringent than medium custody unless subsequent prison adjustment warranted movement to close custody. In doing so, the model remained highly predictive.

Option 3: Separate the Needs Assessment From the Custody Assessment. Regardless of whether gender-responsive needs are incorporated into custody classifications, they are important in their own right. With the exception of relationships and adult victimization, gender-responsive needs were significantly related to LSI-R scores pertaining to offenders' risk of future offending. This underscored the urgency of addressing these needs programmatically. Option 3, a grid for guiding case management and program assignments (Van Voorhis et al., 2001), added gender-responsive needs (except parenting and adult victimization) to the total LSI-R score. (The LSI-R includes needs scores pertaining to criminal associates, employment, education, substance abuse, and other factors.) Gender-responsive needs were not added to the intake custody instrument.

A state could be faulted for increasing a woman's restrictions or reducing her privileges according to problems over which she has no control, such as her mental health status or history of dysfunctional relationships.

If total needs scores are collapsed into three categories (low, moderate, and high needs) and these categories are then cross-tabulated with the custody levels derived from option 1, the needs categories can inform a wide array of correctional decisions. Doing so enables staff to use the needs categories to *inform* public safety, and treatment decisions could be made without affecting an inmate's custody level. Such a system would allow inmates to progress to the least restrictive environment and would inform appropriate program assignments. However, further research is required to assess the power of the needs assessments to inform decisions regarding work assignments outside the security perimeter, furloughs, and prerelease community placements. In addition, staff training regarding management strategies for high-need offenders could reduce staff reliance on disciplinary reports for controlling disruptive behavior.

The CO DOC adopted option 1 because the research using gender-responsive needs for custody decisions is not well established. This was only one study, and it takes many studies with consistent findings to appropriately build an assessment instrument (Van Voorhis et al., 2001). Additional research is needed to test the stability of the scales across different groups of incarcerated women. Moreover, the usefulness of a gender-responsive needs assessment would be more impressive if these factors were correlated with recidivism as well as prison misconduct.

Florida Department of Corrections

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

The Florida Department of Corrections (FL DOC) requested technical assistance to assess the validity of its external and internal classification systems for its female inmate population. Because its classification systems were designed and piloted primarily for the male inmate population, the FL DOC wanted to ensure that the gender-specific risk and needs of the female population were addressed adequately.

During 1999 and 2000, the FL DOC implemented its external Custody Assessment and Reclassification System (CARS) in response to increased concerns about public safety, changes in state sentencing policies, and changes in the characteristics of the inmate population. CARS is a fully automated system that monitors the inmate's criminal history and disciplinary data and prompts the classification staff if changes to the inmate's custody level appear warranted. The system places inmates into one of five custody levels: community, minimum, medium, close, or maximum. The same risk factors are considered for both the initial classification and reclassification: time remaining to serve, escape history, severity of current offenses, type of prior convictions, positive adjustment (institutional programming and work), number and severity of recent disciplinary reports, and stability factors (e.g., age, education, or 6 continuous months of employment or student status prior to the date of the current offense). In addition to these numerically scored risk factors, mandatory policy criteria are considered that determine the least restrictive custody level in

CARS is a fully automated system that monitors the inmate's criminal history and disciplinary data and prompts the classification staff if changes to the inmate's custody level appear warranted.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

which an inmate may be placed. These include outstanding felony detainer, current offense (e.g., high-risk or violent sex offender), escape history, internal management score, release date, alien to be deported, and Immigration and Naturalization Services decision pending.

The impact of CARS was simulated for the entire FL DOC inmate population; however, the validity of the system and the predictive power of the individual risk factors were not assessed for either men or women offenders. Although CARS appeared to differentiate among inmates as to the level and type of custody required for their management, the FL DOC wanted to ensure that the custody levels were distinct and accurate reflections of the inmates' threat to the security and safety of the institution.

The development and implementation of an objective, systematic process for housing the inmate population were identified as part of the 1998–2003 FL DOC Strategic Plan. The system was required to be cost effective and legal and to ensure community safety. An internal classification system that included 16 risk and need factors was automated and fully implemented by October 1998.³ The primary components of the Risk and Needs System are the Risk and Needs Instrument and the Inmate Management Plan. The Risk and Needs Instrument contains information on risk and need factors, as well as information on membership in a security threat group via an interview with the inmate. The factors are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 represents highest need) and based on the inmate's life history, institutional adjustment, and prior participation in recommended programs and jobs.

A preliminary assessment of the Risk and Needs System suggested the need to refine the criteria for placing or maintaining inmates in dormitories and to conduct additional staff training and monitoring to ensure scoring reliability (Hardyman, 2000). Because no closed units are available for females, the need to clarify their housing criteria was particularly critical. Because these preliminary findings were based on the first year of the operation of the Risk and Needs System, the FL DOC wanted to assess the validity and reliability of the system further.

At the same time that the FL DOC's Bureau of Classification and Central Records was planning to assess the validity of CARS and the Risk and Needs System, the department's female advisory committee expressed interest in developing a needs assessment process that systematically compiles and assesses inmates' social, physical, and economic needs. The committee observed that although the Risk and Needs System assesses inmates' mental health, substance abuse, educational, and vocational needs, data on an inmate's wellness and life skills, financial management capabilities, relationships (both within and outside the penal system), and parenting skills were not assessed adequately. The committee also suggested expanding the current assessment of vocational needs to include vocational aptitudes to facilitate placement in an appropriate training program. The bureau agreed that CARS and the Risk and Needs System should be updated periodically to reflect the full spectrum of inmate needs.

Although CARS appeared to differentiate among inmates as to the level and type of custody required for their management, the FL DOC wanted to ensure that the custody levels were distinct and accurate reflections of the inmates' threat to the security and safety of the institution.

Based on a review of the classification systems and input from the female advisory committee, the department undertook a classification initiative to validate both classification systems and conduct a parenting survey.

Validation Effort and Key Results

Task 1: Validate the External Classification System. Data were obtained on the demographic, criminal history, classification, risk and need, and institutional misconduct for samples of men and women offenders admitted during calendar year 2000 and the inmate population from the FL DOC's well-developed automated information system. In addition, a parenting survey for a random sample of 382 men and 368 women offenders was conducted during January 2001.

The FL DOC is one of the largest adult criminal justice systems in the country. As of June 30, 2000, approximately 71,233 offenders were in its custody (including 4,019 women [5.6 percent] (Florida Department of Corrections, 2001a). The most serious offense for more than half of FL DOC male inmates was a violent offense (52 percent).⁴ In addition, 24 percent had been convicted of a property offense, 18 percent a drug-related offense, and 6 percent other offenses. Among the women offenders, the distribution of offenses was somewhat different: property offenses, 42 percent; drug-related offenses, 29 percent; violent offenses, 25 percent; and other crimes, 4 percent.⁵

At initial classification, women offenders represented a lower risk than male inmates. About 71 percent of women scored as minimum custody, compared with about 62 percent of males. The data indicated that the FL DOC classification process is driven primarily by the mandatory custody criteria rather than the scored risk factors: at initial classification, the mandatory custody criteria affected the suggested custody level of 46.1 percent of women offenders and 33.5 percent of male inmates. The data also indicated that in addition to mandatory policy considerations, the rate of discretionary overrides was slightly higher than the standard recommended range of 5 to 15 percent. The discretionary override rate was less than 15 percent only at initial classification among men. The highest rate of discretionary overrides was observed at the most recent classification review for the sample male inmates (20.3 percent). The suggested custody level was modified for approximately 20 percent of the women offenders at both the initial and the most recent classifications.

The validation analyses focused on the power of the combination of the classification scale and custody criteria to categorize offenders into distinct custody levels according to their threat to the safety and security of the institution, staff, other offenders, and themselves. For the purposes of these analyses, inmates' involvement in major and minor institutional infractions was the primary outcome variable. The data indicated that the custody levels identified through CARS were statistically

The suggested custody level was modified for approximately 20 percent of the women offenders at both the initial and the most recent classifications.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

correlated with institutional adjustment and that the system identifies statistically distinct custody levels. The analyses, however, identified three concerns:

- ◆ **Reliance on mandatory custody criteria.** The final custody levels appeared to be determined by the mandatory custody criteria rather than the scored risk factors.
- ◆ **High rate of discretionary overrides.** The rate of discretionary overrides was above the national standard range of 15 percent, i.e., it ranged between 12.6 and 20.3 percent of the cases.
- ◆ **Overclassification of women offenders designated as medium custody at initial classification.** The rates of institutional misconduct among medium custody women offenders were similar to those observed among minimum custody male inmates. This suggested that at initial classification, female medium custody inmates were overclassified because inmates with similar rates of misconduct were placed in less restrictive settings.

Task 2: Validate the Internal Classification System. One of the key questions raised by the women offenders steering committee was the prevalence and types of needs among FL DOC women offenders and the relationship of these needs to their institutional adjustment. The department also was interested in the validity of the Risk and Needs System. These questions were considered through analyses of the risk and needs data compiled for the initial and most recent reclassification assessments. Data were analyzed for—

- ◆ All females admitted to the FL DOC during 2000.
- ◆ A random sample of the female inmate population on December 31, 2000.
- ◆ A random sample of men admitted during 2000.
- ◆ A random sample of the male inmate population on December 31, 2000.

Overall, the data provided some support for the assumption that risk and need factors are correlated with institutional adjustment. The factors with the strongest correlation were outside work assignment, internal management, internal housing, and restructuring potential. The data also supported the assumption that some factors affect men and women differently. Surprisingly, some risk factors that were expected to be correlated with institutional adjustment among women offenders (e.g., family relationships and friends and peers) were not associated with institutional adjustment at admission. On the other hand, child welfare and intimate relationships were related to institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders.

Only about half of the Risk and Needs System factors were statistically correlated with institutional adjustment for inmates at admission. Among women, academic education, substance abuse, Prison Industries Enterprise/Pride (PIE/Pride), outside influences,

The factors with the strongest correlation with institutional adjustment were outside work assignment, internal management, internal housing, and restructuring potential.

Child welfare and intimate relationships were related to institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders.

Appendix A

transition assistance, and attitudes and motivations were not correlated with institutional adjustment. Among men, academic education, work competency, PIE/Pride, and the transition program were not correlated with institutional adjustment.

The relationship between risk factors and institutional adjustment appeared to be less stable for women offenders. Certain factors (e.g., work competency and internal management) appeared to have relatively strong relationships with institutional adjustment at admission but were not correlated with adjustment at the most recent assessment. As expected, the factors that include prior institutional adjustment and escape history in their operational definition (internal management, internal housing, work release, and outside work assignment) had relatively strong correlations with institutional adjustment, particularly for male inmates.

The best overall indicator of the validity of the internal classification is its ability to identify an appropriate housing assignment. In other words, did it identify inmates who require additional structure and supervision as indicated by higher rates of disciplinary infractions (particularly major infractions) and who should be recommended for more restrictive housing? The data suggest a strong correlation between housing recommendation and institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders at initial and last assessments. Therefore, the Risk and Needs System appeared to be a valid indicator of the risks and needs posed by the inmates. Unfortunately, particularly among male inmates, it appeared that the power of the system was diminished by the failure to house inmates according to the recommendations it generated. The most interesting finding regarding the Risk and Needs System was the similarity of the impact of the risk factors on institutional adjustment for both men and women offenders.

Task 3: FL DOC Parenting Survey. One of the key concerns among steering committee members was the absence of information on the children of women offenders. The literature on women offenders has frequently cited the welfare of their children as one of the most critical and traumatic issues with which women offenders struggle. Unfortunately, these data were not collected consistently nor were they stored in the FL DOC computer system in a way that provided for easy access or retrieval. Therefore, to learn about the impact of this issue on FL DOC inmates, a brief survey of a random sample of inmates was conducted during the spring of 2000.

The parenting survey data suggested that women offenders have employed a variety of means to provide for the care of their children while they are incarcerated, such as grandparents, relatives, friends, and state foster care. A large proportion of women reported that they had lost their parenting rights—31 percent. Responsibility for most of the children had been transferred to a family member rather than to the state or an adoptive parent. The average age of the children was 9.7 years, although nearly 20 percent of the women had preschool-aged children. On average, the women had 3.2 children under the age of 18.

Although the data offered few surprises, one finding was most troubling: it appeared that children of women offenders were at greater risk than children of male inmates.

A large proportion of women reported that they had lost their parenting rights—31 percent.

For example, women offenders' children were more likely to have been placed out of the home by the court, arrested, or supported by welfare, foster parents, or the juvenile justice system. Children of women offenders also were less likely to visit their incarcerated parent (57.1 percent of women offenders reported that their children would not visit them in prison, compared with 34.6 percent of male inmates).

Parenting data could not be merged with classification or disciplinary data; therefore, the relationship between institutional adjustment and such factors as the number of children, their visitation, location, and the inmate's relationship with the children could not be determined. Modification of the data collection system to allow for future analyses of child-related issues and institutional adjustment was recommended.

Hawaii Department of Public Safety

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

As of March 2000, when the Hawaii Department of Public Safety (HI DPS) women's classification initiative began, 236 women were housed at the Women's Community Correctional Center on Oahu. An additional 79 women had been sent to Oklahoma to relieve prison overcrowding. This total population of 315 represented a 92-percent increase in the HI DPS women prisoner population within 8 years. Thus, although the initial request included a jail risk and needs assessment system, the goal of reducing overclassification in the women's prison through a valid institutional classification system became the top priority in order to help move women to minimum and community custody and transfer women from Oklahoma to Oahu. Returning the women from Oklahoma was important, not just to save costs, but to reunite the women with their families.

HI DPS's current classification system was implemented in 1991. A validation study, completed in 1996, did not disaggregate the female population (Bench, 1996). Overall, the 1996 study found that classification scores suffered from "extensive missing values, coding omissions, and coding irregularities." Thus, the validity and reliability of the classification system were compromised (Bench, 1996).

The initial classification factors included severity of prior institutional violence, current and prior offenses, escape history, history of assaultive behaviors, involvement in substance abuse, prior felony convictions, and stability factors (e.g., education, age, and employment). The reclassification instrument added time-to-serve, frequency and severity of prison misconduct, and involvement in alcohol or drugs while incarcerated. Nondiscretionary overrides to medium custody were required for inmates who were violent within the past year, on detainers, within 7 years of an escape or attempted escape, or sentenced to maximum terms greater than 60 months (at initial classification) or 48 months (at reclassification).

Children of women offenders were less likely to visit their incarcerated parent.

A qualitative assessment of the classification system by the steering committee and focus groups (composed of women offenders and key staff at the Women's Community Corrections Center (WCCC)) identified the classification risk factors and policies that appeared to be contributing to overclassification. Most issues involved the scores and timeframes assigned to prior acts of violence, institutional misconduct, and escapes. Validation of the existing and modified instruments required manual data collection on systematic, random samples of 112 initial custody assessments and 99 reclassifications. Sampling difficulties and case attrition due to parole hearings, discharges, and missing data reduced the sample size.⁶

The data supported HI DPS's concerns regarding overclassification. For example, at initial classification 56 percent of the inmates were classified at medium or above; at reclassification, 30 percent were classified at medium or above. A comparison with other validation studies found medium custody inmates made up 16 to 18 percent of incarcerated women offenders (Hardyman and Pearson, 2001; Hardyman and Tulloch, 2000). Aggression rates among HI DPS women were slightly higher than those observed in other studies involving women offenders but lower than rates for men offenders (Hardyman, 2001a; Harer and Langan, 2001; Austin, Chan, and Elms, 1993; Brennan, 1998).

The data supported HI DPS's concerns regarding overclassification.

Validation Effort and Key Results

The current classification system was correlated with overall and serious institutional misconduct during the first 9 months of incarceration. For the initial classification sample, statistically significant relationships were observed between custody levels and overall misconduct ($r = .22, p \leq .05$) and serious misconduct ($r = .27, p \leq .01$). At reclassification, the relationship between custody level and serious misconduct was significant ($r = .29, p \leq .10$) but not for overall misconduct. Even so, only three of nine initial classification factors and five of nine reclassification factors contributed to the validity of the system.

The initial classification assignment was heavily influenced by mandatory and discretionary overrides. On initial classification, although only 22 percent of the women scored as medium custody based on their total points, 76 percent were assigned to medium custody. Most of these overrides were based on a mandatory restriction that required inmates with a maximum sentence greater than 60 months to be assigned to medium custody or above.

A similar pattern was observed at reclassification: 24 of 27 inmates (89 percent) were assigned to medium custody by virtue of a mandatory override. Again, the most common override reason was time-to-serve (48 months or more remaining until parole eligibility date). Time-to-serve also influenced the community custody decisions because inmates were ineligible for community custody until they were within 24 months of their parole eligibility or discharge date.

Modifications proposed by the steering committee and supported by statistical analysis improved the predictive validity of the classification system and reduced

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

overclassification. The modified initial custody levels were more strongly related to overall misconduct ($r = .33, p \leq .01$) and serious misconduct ($r = .27, p \leq .01$). For the modified reclassification instrument, the findings were not as strong but better than those for the existing system. The proportion of women offenders classified at intake as medium custody or above decreased from 55 percent on the existing system to 47 percent on the modified system. At reclassification, these proportions decreased from 30 percent on the existing system to 20 percent on the modified system. Most of the improvements were attributable to eliminating time-to-serve as a mandatory override.

Somewhat unexpected was the finding that time-to-serve was significantly correlated with prison misconduct (Van Voorhis and Pealer, 2001). Therefore, it was recommended as a scored classification variable at intake. This reduced its impact on the overall custody level, unless other risk factors were present. Because the reclassification data indicated that community custody offenders incurred a substantial number of misconduct reports, it appeared that the current time and custody variables were not adequate predictors of community adjustment. Thus, the use of a community risk assessment instrument to guide the supervision of community-based offenders was recommended for the reclassification process. Except for detainees, all of the current mandatory overrides were redefined as discretionary overrides because they contributed to overclassification and/or duplicated one or more of the scored custody variables. The recommended initial and reclassification instruments are provided in appendix B. In summary, the recommended changes to the classification items were as follows:

- ◆ Reduce the timeframes and scores associated with less serious acts of institutional violence.
- ◆ Reduce the score for the severity of the current offense if the crime was a one-time act of violence against an abuser committed in self-defense.⁷
- ◆ Reduce the score for time-to-serve at reclassification for women whose minimum sentence was 21 years or more.
- ◆ Add time-to-serve as an initial classification custody factor.
- ◆ Change sentence length from a mandatory to a discretionary override.
- ◆ Differentiate a walk-away from a community facility and an escape from a secure facility for the escape variable and reduce the timeframe for considering a walk-away.
- ◆ Delete involvement in substance abuse from the initial classification form.
- ◆ Exclude escapes from consideration as a prior felony conviction on the initial classification form.

Somewhat unexpected was the finding that time-to-serve was significantly correlated with prison misconduct.

Appendix A

- ◆ Redefine *employed* to include women engaged in full-time child rearing.
- ◆ Modify the operational definitions for the frequency and severity of misconduct to exclude escapes and to only count misconduct during the past 12 months.
- ◆ Add performance in work and programs as a reclassification factor.
- ◆ Modify age groups for the initial classification form.

A final contribution to the validity of the modified system was attributable to the correction of errors. As with the earlier validation study, an extremely high rate of scoring errors and discrepancies was observed among the classification variables (Bench, 1996). Although corrected for this project, they illustrate that not all classification problems are attributable to classification instruments. Given systemic problems, even a valid system becomes invalid very quickly. Quality control is an important aspect of any classification system. Thus, the final report recommended attention to staff training, quality control procedures, a community risk assessment, and needs assessments in addition to the modifications to the classification instruments.

Idaho Department of Correction

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

The Idaho Department of Correction (ID DOC) requested technical assistance to assess the external classification system used for its female inmate population because the system appeared to overclassify women, placing them in more restrictive housing units than required given their level of threat to the safety and security of the facility and community (Hardyman and Pearson, 2001). The classification system had not been validated for the female inmate population since its design and implementation in the early 1990s. Because the female inmate population had grown substantially since the design and initial testing of the system, the ID DOC suspected that the system was not appropriate for the current inmate population. Initial onsite meetings with staff and a review of the classification instruments and manual suggested that the poor quality of the classification manual contributed to concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the women's classification system.

The staff at the women's facilities reported they had been dissatisfied with the classification system for some time. Based on a review of the classification instruments, system admission trends, and a preliminary onsite assessment, it was recommended that the department undertake a classification initiative to—

- ◆ Validate the classification system for the current female inmate population.
- ◆ Revise the classification manual to clarify the operational definitions of the classification risk factors.
- ◆ Provide training for all classification staff.

The poor quality of the classification manual contributed to concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the women's classification system.

ID DOC's initial classification score sheet includes numerically weighted criminal history information to determine the appropriate custody level. The risk factors include severity of current offense, time-to-serve, severity and type of prior criminal record, and escape history. In addition to these criminal history factors, the reclassification score sheet considers inmates' institutional work record and recent disciplinary record. Inmates are classified into one of four custody levels: close, medium, minimum, or community. The fourth custody level, community, also is contingent on the offender's criminal history and legal status. Inmates with more than 24 months to serve, a history of escape, a predatory sex offense, and/or a current detainer are not eligible for placement in a community corrections center.

The system also provides for discretionary overrides to a higher security level in response to evidence of homicidal, violent, suicidal, self-mutilating, and psychotic behavior not adequately addressed by the numerical classification. In addition, if no presentence investigation report is available at initial classification, intake staff have the option of placing an inmate in medium custody for up to 60 days until the record is reviewed. Discretionary overrides to a lower custody level based on the time left to serve are also permitted to provide the inmate an opportunity to participate in pre-release programming.

When recommending a custody level, the case manager also considers the inmate's program needs, including physical health, emotional stability, reintegration, academic skills, substance abuse, and vocational and other needs. The classification committee reviews the completed classification score sheet with the inmate.⁸ The committee is responsible for custody level recommendations, subject to review and modification by the facility head or designee.

Validation Effort and Key Results

Using a consensus-building process, the women's classification committee, consisting of representatives from the two ID DOC women's facilities and administrative divisions, reviewed the initial and reclassification score sheets to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each item and the classification process as a whole. Factors associated with institutional misconduct and security concerns were identified. As a result of this discussion, the committee developed operational definitions for assessing program participation and institutional adjustment. It also considered the appropriate categories for age, offense severity ratings, institutional misconduct, and prior criminal history. The classification instruments and manual were revised based on the committee's decisions. ID DOC staff pretested the revised instruments, using a sample of approximately 30 women offenders, and based on their findings, further modified the instruments and manual. Because data were not available within the ID DOC information system, data were manually collected on all women offenders admitted to an ID DOC facility between July 1, 1999, and June 30, 2000, and also on the inmate population on December 31, 2000, if admitted to the ID DOC prior to July 1, 1999. Data were collected on 216 inmates.

In addition to criminal history factors, the reclassification score sheet considers inmates' institutional work record and recent disciplinary record.

Appendix A

Analyses of the disciplinary data indicated that the majority of women (80 percent) did not receive a disciplinary infraction report during the first 6 months of the current incarceration.

Data suggest that the majority of infractions, especially the serious Class A reports, were committed by a relatively small group of inmates.

Demographic and offense profiles of the two samples indicated that only about 12 percent of the women were incarcerated for a felony person-related offense; the majority were incarcerated for a property or drug-related offense (55 and 36 percent, respectively). Analyses of the women's criminal history suggested that 23 percent of the population was incarcerated for a parole or probation violation. At admission, the women's ages ranged from 17 to 54 years; the mean age was 32.7 years. At initial classification, the custody distribution was community custody, 52 percent; minimum custody, 33 percent; medium custody, 11 percent; and close custody, 4 percent. Among those in the reclassification sample, the custody distribution was community custody, 38 percent; minimum custody, 25 percent; medium custody, 34 percent; and close custody, 3 percent. The greater number of community custody inmates at initial classification than at reclassification was due primarily to the "rider" population.⁹ The majority of riders are placed in community custody to facilitate their participation in special programming. Most are released within 6 months of their admission and thus are never reclassified.

Analyses of the disciplinary data indicated that the majority of women (80 percent) did not receive a disciplinary infraction report during the first 6 months of the current incarceration. The mean number of infractions was 0.41 reports. To better understand the rate of institutional predatory behaviors among women offenders, the sanctions imposed for the most serious (Class A) infractions were examined. Only two women were placed in administrative segregation and three were placed in detention. These placements suggested that the majority of the women were not serious threats to the safety and security of the facility because they were not isolated in administrative segregation or detention.

The rates of disciplinary infractions observed among women in the reclassification sample were quite different than those observed in the initial sample. The majority of women (64 percent) had at least one disciplinary infraction. Among the women who received a Class A disciplinary report, only about 18 percent were placed in administrative segregation. However, about 30 percent were sent to detention four or more times. It was clear that the women involved in Class A infractions also had higher overall rates of misconduct. For example, among women with one or more Class A infractions, the mean overall number of infractions was 7.3 reports. In contrast, among women whose most serious infraction was a Class B report, the mean overall rate of infractions was 2.7 reports. And finally, among women whose most serious infraction was a Class C report, the overall mean number of infractions was 1.4. These data suggest that the majority of infractions, especially the serious Class A reports, were committed by a relatively small group of inmates.

The statistical analyses of the risk factors and custody scale clearly indicated that the modified classification forms identified custody levels for ID DOC women offenders at initial and reclassification assessments that were statistically related to institutional adjustment. Several modifications to the classification instruments were suggested by the analyses. The severity of the current offense, for example, was a statistically significant factor only after the offense severity scale was revised.

Person-related offenses were rated as high severity; property crimes such as burglary, forgery, bad checks, voluntary manslaughter, and involuntary manslaughter were rated as moderate severity; and drug-related offenses, driving under the influence, and the like were rated as low severity.

Similar to the pattern observed in other jurisdictions, time-to-serve was not correlated with institutional adjustment among ID DOC women offenders because of the short time served by the women and the erratic behavior of the rider population. To optimize the predictive power of the instruments, it was recommended that the time remaining to serve be considered a discretionary override factor for community or work-release placements.

The original ID DOC female classification instruments did not include age as a risk factor. The analyses indicated that current age was a strong predictor of institutional adjustment and that the categories should be defined as age 20 or younger, 21 through 29, 30 through 43, and 44 years or older.

In an attempt to hold inmates accountable for their behavior, a risk factor was developed to reflect women's participation in recommended programs since their last classification. As with many state correctional systems, participation in institutional work and treatment programming was a strong predictor of institutional adjustment among Idaho women offenders (Hardyman, Austin, and Tulloch, 2000). Women who complied with recommended work and treatment assignments had significantly lower rates of disciplinary reports than women who refused to participate or were recently fired because of their performance.

The classification manual was revised to reflect the modifications to the instruments approved by the ID DOC. A comprehensive training to introduce the modifications to the classification system was provided to all ID DOC intake, case management, and supervisory staff within its female correctional facilities. To ensure consistency among raters when they apply the classification operational definitions and procedures, the training included reliability testing using actual ID DOC case files.

Nebraska Department of Correctional Services

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NE DCS) requested technical assistance to address overclassification of its women offenders. Staff also were concerned that the current system did not adequately reflect important differences between men and women offenders. The initial site visit revealed a number of important features of the NE DCS system:

- ◆ More than 90 percent of the women offenders housed at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (NCCW) were released within 12 months of intake due to the state's indeterminate sentencing laws and the minor nature of the women's offenses.

As with many state correctional systems, participation in institutional work and treatment programming was a strong predictor of institutional adjustment among Idaho women offenders.

More than 90 percent of the women offenders housed at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women were released within 12 months of intake.

Appendix A

- ◆ Except for the assignment to community custody and prisoner movements outside the perimeter, the current custody system *did not* inform housing assignments or institutional placements because the women of all custody levels were housed in the same unit and interacted with each other during recreation, meals, programs, and other activities.
- ◆ Women offenders were overclassified: 57 percent of prison releases were from minimum, medium, or maximum custody rather than community custody.¹⁰ Even with short sentences for women, overrides of the classification scores were required to move them into community custody. Clearly, community correctional resources were underused.
- ◆ Movement to community custody was not restricted solely by the classification system. A personalized plan outlined the programming requirements to be completed prior to movement to community custody. For example, the 8-week cognitive program, Generic Out-Patient Levels Format, was mandatory for all women. In addition, many women were assigned to education, work, mental health, substance abuse, self-help, and/or other court-ordered requirements. With waiting lists for most programs, many inmates had insufficient time to complete their personalized plan and progress to community custody before release.

NE DCS uses the same classification system (Factor Rating Score) for both male and female inmates. Factors on the initial classification instrument include severity of the current offense, prior commitments, escapes or attempted escapes, past violence, projected length of incarceration, and active detainees. Reclassification Factor Rating Scores include active detainees, escapes, past violence, involvement in drugs or alcohol while incarcerated, and frequency and severity of disciplinary infractions during the previous 12 months. In contrast to other objective classification systems, factors pertaining to the current offense, prior commitments, and length of sentence are not included on the reclassification instrument. In addition, misconducts are counted for only one classification period. Inmates with no misconducts progress to lower classification levels relatively quickly. The NE DCS Division of Classification and Programming developed both the initial and reclassification instruments. Neither instrument had been validated formally.

A preliminary test, conducted as part of this initiative, indicated that the system was invalid for women offenders and was only modestly related to serious misconduct among male offenders. Given that more than 90 percent of the women were released within 12 months and the classification system does not impact housing, programming, or work assignments and given the invalidity of the classification system for the women, implementation of a community risk assessment instrument was recommended for the following reasons:

- ◆ The classification issues were pertinent to community rather than institutional risk because the main classification consideration involved movement to community. Most women offenders lived in a single housing unit in which their custody level did not influence their room assignment.

- ◆ Use of a custody instrument to inform community-related decisions provided a false sense of security because, in general, custody instruments are not predictive of new offenses in the community.
- ◆ Some community risk assessment instruments, however, are predictive of prison misconduct. A community risk assessment system, in other words, could inform institutional as well as community safety.

The steering committee examined two types of community risk assessment instruments: the Wisconsin Risk Assessment and the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (Andrews and Bonta, 1995).¹¹ The LSI–R was chosen because its focus on needs could help prioritize the assignment of women to programs and thus reduce program waiting lists. For a time, the steering committee considered using two classification instruments: the LSI–R for informing program placements and community risk and an institutional classification instrument to inform custody assignments based on institutional adjustment and criminal history. This process would have ensured that assignment to medium and close custody was based on prior offenses and poor prison adjustment rather than the inmate's needs or problems.

Validation Effort and Key Results

Because the preliminary analyses of the existing NE DCS custody system indicated it was problematic for both men and women, the steering committee decided to redesign the custody classification system as a separate initiative. The immediate goal was to validate and implement the LSI–R for women offenders. Therefore, in July 2001, NE DCS classification, administrative, and case management staff were trained to administer and score the LSI–R. The plan was to complete a validation study on a sample of 150 women offenders by February 2002. For several reasons, the project timeline was revised. By January 2002, 100 LSI–R assessments had been completed. However, this was not a representative sample of NCCW inmates because the validation design required that women remain in the custody of the NE DCS for at least 6 months following the interview. As a result, this sample was skewed toward serious offenders with longer sentences. As such, the sample permitted an assessment of predictive validity but may have inflated the number of medium- and high-risk offenders and the proportion of offenders with specific needs.

The LSI–R scores ranged from 6 to 47 (mean = 23, standard deviation = 7.7). When these scores were collapsed into standardized risk levels, 52 percent of the sample was classified as minimum or medium risk. Contrary to a concern for sample irregularities, the LSI–R scores were not higher than those observed in other studies of women (Lowenkamp, Holsinger, and Latessa, 2001; Rettinger, 1998). As expected, the women classified as high-medium or maximum risk presented the greatest need for programming and further assessments. Put in terms of the agency's goals for reducing assessments and programming options, the data suggested that—

- ◆ Educational testing could be reduced by 42 percent.

Use of a custody instrument to inform community-related decisions provided a false sense of security because, in general, custody instruments are not predictive of new offenses in the community.

Appendix A

The data helped to differentiate among the women's needs. Thus, personalized plans could be better tailored to their individual needs.

- ◆ Substance abuse assessments could be reduced by 26 percent.
- ◆ Mental health assessments could be reduced by 48 percent (although this was not recommended).

Further, the data helped to differentiate among the women's needs. Thus, personalized plans could be better tailored to their individual needs, i.e.—

- ◆ Life skills: 87 percent.
- ◆ Job development: 75 percent.
- ◆ Criminal thinking: 69 percent (rather than 100 percent).
- ◆ Academic: 58 percent.

Because the sample was skewed, these estimates of both assessment and programming needs will be adjusted as more exact data representative of all newly admitted inmates become available. In addition to using the LSI-R as a tool for prioritizing assessment and programming services, clear implications exist for community placement and programming decisions. Approximately 7 percent of the sample scored as minimum risk on the LSI-R. On meeting statutorily prescribed criteria for release, these offenders are better candidates for work release, furloughs, and early releases than those classified as medium-high risk or above.

In terms of its predictive validity, the LSI-R was significantly, but modestly, related to serious prison misconduct and to the number of days in segregation. The interviews and resultant scores, however, contained a number of errors. These may be attributed to the fact that staff were not able to begin interviews until several months after their training.

West Virginia Division of Corrections

Classification Issues and Validation

Classification of women offenders has been a concern for several years in West Virginia. In the mid-1980s, the West Virginia Division of Corrections (WV DOC) implemented a classification system based on the model developed by Robert Buchanan and associates (Hardyman and Davies, 2001). Shortly after its implementation, the WV DOC explored the idea of developing gender-specific criteria for work release (i.e., community custody). This effort was halted when male inmates brought forth a grievance asserting that the proposed work-release criteria for women discriminated against them because they included criteria that were less rigorous than those used for men. To avoid expensive, time-consuming litigation, the WV DOC abandoned the idea of separate work-release criteria for men and women offenders. Although this decision halted the further development and implementation of a gender-responsive classification system, it did not resolve staff concerns about overclassification and high rates of overrides among women offenders.

The external classification system used by the WV DOC relies on two scales. The Public Risk Scale assesses an inmate's threat to public safety. It asks these questions: What is the likelihood that the offender will escape? If she escapes, what harm does she pose to the community? This scale considers the extent of violence in the current offense, use of a weapon during the current offense, escape history, prior institutional commitments, violence associated with prior convictions, presence of holds and/or detainers, and time to possible release. The risk factors are rated on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 representing the greatest threat to public safety. An offender's public safety score is based on the highest score across the seven public risk factors. For example, if an offender scores 5 on the first factor, extent of violence during the current offense, and 0 on the remaining six factors, her Public Risk Score will be 5.

The Institutional Risk Scale assesses an inmate's potential adjustment to an institutional setting. This scale considers the inmate's community stability, prior institutional adjustment, need for special management, psychological stability, adjustment while on probation or parole, and alcohol or drug use. Four of the six institutional risk factors are scored from 0 to 4, with 4 representing the greatest threat to the safety and security of the institution, staff, other inmates, and self. The remaining two institutional risk factors (community stability and alcohol or drug use) are scored from 0 to 3, with 3 representing the highest risk. An inmate's institutional risk score is based on the highest score across the six institutional risk factors.

An inmate's overall custody level is the higher of two scores. For example, if an inmate has a public risk score of 5 and an institutional risk score of 1, her scored custody level will be 5. The system provides for overrides of the scored custody level based on such factors as notoriety of crime or criminal, sophistication of crime or criminal, security threat group affiliation, enemies, and suicidal, assaultive, or predatory behaviors. Inmates are classified into one of five custody levels: V (maximum), IV (close), III (medium), II (minimum), or I (community).

Prior to undertaking this validation effort, WV DOC staff participated in NIC's Objective Classification System training program in June 2000 to learn more about classification issues and to develop a classification work plan. The two objectives identified were to assess the validity of the existing classification system and update the classification policies and instruments based on the results.

Validation Effort and Key Results

The validity of the existing classification system for WV DOC women offenders was the primary issue this initiative addressed. To improve the predictive power of the instruments for women offenders, the steering committee also identified alternative criteria to consider for the public and institutional risk factors. The predictive power of the existing public and institutional risk factors and custody scale, as well as the alternative criteria identified by the steering committee, was assessed.

Multiple samples were used to validate the classification system and determine the need for a gender-specific classification system. Because of the relatively small size

The validity of the existing classification system for WV DOC women offenders was the primary issue this initiative addressed.

of the WV DOC female population (the average daily population during 2000 was 149 inmates), a list of women offenders admitted during calendar year 2000 was generated. Initial classification data were collected from the prison case files for 162 women. Similarly, to assess the reclassification risk factors, data were collected on women offenders admitted during 2000 and/or who were incarcerated as of December 31, 2000. Reclassification data were collected from the prison case files on 181 women. In addition, to demonstrate the relative validity of the classification system for the male inmates, electronic data on the criminal history, institutional adjustment, and custody level of all men incarcerated as of December 31, 2000, were obtained.

Demographic and offense profiles of the women offenders offered few surprises. More than 40 percent of women were incarcerated for a felony person-related offense (41.4 percent), and about one-third of the sample was incarcerated for a drug offense (32.1 percent). (A felony person-related offense is a felony crime in which there was direct contact or interaction with the victim.) The data suggested that women spent relatively short periods of time within the WV DOC.¹² On average, women offenders had less than 2 years remaining until the expiration of their sentence or the parole eligibility date. It appeared that illicit drugs or alcohol was involved in the current offense for approximately 40 percent of the women.

Institutional stress factors affected 39.5 percent of the women and their adjustment to the facility. Although such issues as family, children, and health are important for all prisoners, they were considered stress factors if they affected women's institutional adjustment or required professional attention. The data indicated that family and institutional relationships were stress factors for nearly 10 percent of women, as were mental health (7.4 percent) and children (6.8 percent).

More than half of the WV DOC sample (53.7 percent) were held at medium custody level. Less than one-third were in minimum custody (29.6 percent), 16 percent close custody, and 0.6 percent maximum custody. These data suggest that the system may be overclassifying the women offenders, given national estimates that 40 to 50 percent of women offenders are classified as minimum custody.

To better understand the dynamic factors that have an impact on women offenders' institutional adjustment, detailed analyses of community stability were conducted. This institutional risk factor included several of the issues frequently cited as critical to women's adjustment to a correctional setting. In the WV DOC classification system, community stability is a function of 10 subfactors: age, marital status, education, employment history, military record, special situations, institutional work record, unit manager's evaluation/housing reports, program participation, and institutional stress factors. Each subfactor is rated on a scale of 1 to 3; an average of the 10 scores determines the overall rating for the risk factor.

Analysis of age as a risk factor indicated that it is a statistically significant predictor of minor disciplinary infractions for the women offenders at initial and reclassification points. However, age was not correlated with the serious or predatory

Institutional stress factors affected 39.5 percent of the women and their adjustment to the facility.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

(assaultive) infractions. This finding was expected given the low rate of predatory behaviors among women offenders. The appropriate age categories for the WV DOC women offenders were 28 years or less, 29 to 36 years, 37 to 47 years, and 48 or more years.

An issue frequently cited when considering gender-responsive classification and needs assessment instruments is that factors may be gender-biased because they do not reflect the life experiences of women offenders. The operational definition of the stability factor employment, for example, usually considers only full-time, salaried positions at arrest or conviction. The inmate's childcare and homemaker roles in the community are ignored. To determine whether childcare and homemaker roles should be included in the operational definition of employment history, data were collected on women offenders' employment status on arrest for the current offense. Women whose primary role was homemaker or childcare had rates of institutional infractions comparable to those with full-time employment. This supported the inclusion of childcare and homemaker roles in the operational definition of employment as an indicator of community stability.

Dynamic needs (such as family, children, mental health, and medical needs) are additional factors frequently suggested by correctional staff to be linked with women offenders' institutional adjustment. Analyses of these dynamic factors indicated that family, mental health, and institutional relationships were statistically correlated with institutional misconduct among WV DOC women offenders. Women for whom institutional relationships were a stress factor, for example, had higher rates of institutional infractions than women for whom institutional relationships were not a stress factor. On the other hand, children, health, legal issues, and other stress factors, individually, were not correlated with institutional adjustment.

While institutional relationships had the strongest direct correlation with institutional adjustment, the presence of multiple stress factors was also highly correlated with institutional adjustment. In other words, although concerns about one's children are not statistically correlated with institutional adjustment, this factor in combination with one or more other stress factors was related to poor institutional adjustment. Therefore, the creation of a risk factor that considers the number of stress factors experienced by women appeared to be a potentially strong predictor of institutional adjustment.

Data also were collected on the relationship between program participation and institutional adjustment. Program participation is a dynamic factor that may indicate the inmate's willingness to comply with treatment recommendations, involvement in positive institutional activities, and constructive use of time. Among WV DOC women offenders, program participation was highly correlated with institutional adjustment at reclassification.

These analyses suggested that dynamic risk factors were consistently better predictors of women offenders' institutional adjustment than traditional criminal history factors. Although the analyses suggested some potential modifications to the risk

Women whose primary role was homemaker or childcare had rates of institutional infractions comparable to those with full-time employment.

The creation of a risk factor that considers the number of stress factors experienced by women appeared to be a potentially strong predictor of institutional adjustment.

Analyses suggested that dynamic risk factors were consistently better predictors of women offenders' institutional adjustment than traditional criminal history factors.

factors, simply tinkering with the criminal history factors would not address the problems associated with the Public Risk Scale or the overall classification system. One of the most problematic findings was that the Public Risk Scale was the primary determinant of the custody level for most of the women offenders, yet it was not a valid or reliable predictor of institutional adjustment.

On consideration of these findings, a full redesign of the classification system for WV DOC populations—both males and females—was recommended. It appeared that a system that combined dynamic risk factors with traditional static risk factors (such as current offense and escape history) dramatically improved the validity of the classification system.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Classification Issues and Validation Tasks

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) requested technical assistance to assess its classification processes for women offenders and to obtain feedback and recommendations regarding its plans to develop a gender-specific classification system (Hardyman, 2001b). Development of a gender-specific classification system was one of eight recommendations outlined by a cross-divisional team that examined issues critical to managing women offenders. The Wisconsin Female Offender Agency Plan¹³ documented the history, existing resources, and critical issues faced by the WI DOC and proposed a strategy for viewing the women offender population as a unique correctional population that requires specialized interventions, programs, and services. As part of the planning process, the Bureau of Classification and Movement sought feedback to ensure that the system had been fully assessed and that the most recent research and perspectives concerning the classification of women offenders were included in the agency's plan.

The WI DOC classification system uses objective assessment instruments to identify inmates' level of risk (high, moderate, or low). Similar instruments are used for initial classification and reclassification, the primary differences being that inmates' current and prior offense histories are not considered at reclassification. The reclassification instrument also considers institutional program participation. Both instruments include these common custody risk factors: current offense, prior criminal history, sentence structure, institutional adjustment, escape history, emotional and mental health, behavior and attitude, program performance, and temporary factors such as detainer or hold.¹⁴ WI DOC's scoring process is unique compared with most state classification systems. If an inmate receives a high score on any one of the risk items, the inmate is considered a high risk. Similarly, if the inmate receives a moderate score on any of the eight items (and no high ratings), she is considered a moderate risk. Thus, to be designated a low risk, the inmate cannot rate moderate or high on any of the risk factors.

The system provides for discretionary decisions and overrides of the custody level indicated by the risk rating. For example, staff have the discretion to recommend

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

low custody if the inmate rates moderate on only one risk factor. However, if the inmate scores moderate on two or more risk factors and the staff recommends low custody, the decision is considered an override. Unfortunately, the rates and reasons for the discretionary and override decisions are not systematically documented.

The WI DOC classification system strongly emphasizes assessment of inmates' needs and participation in programming. During an era when many state correctional agencies have adopted a "get tough" policy and reduced opportunities for programming and treatment, the WI DOC is an exception. Treatment and programming are clearly priorities, although adequate services and program slots are not available for women offenders. All staff emphasized that custody, housing, programming, and facility assignment are functions of inmates' risk and needs. During the reclassification process, it appeared that programming and treatment needs often outweighed the risk assessment rating. For example, staff sometimes modified or overrode the risk ratings to provide offenders access to recommended programming with little discussion of the security implications.

The WI DOC intake process uses the same needs assessment instruments for men and women offenders. A series of screening instruments is used to identify medical, mental health, dental, sex offender, substance abuse, and educational needs. If a need is identified on the screening instrument, the offender is referred to the appropriate medical or clinical staff for further assessment. Vocational testing is available to inmates based on their age (25 years and younger) and county of commitment. Anger management, domestic relations, and parenting needs are not assessed systematically but rather identified from the social history report, description of the offense, observation, and self-report by the inmate. Rating the need for substance abuse treatment is derived from a six-question screening instrument, the UNCOPE. As a part of the initial interview or meeting with inmates, caseworkers review the risk assessment and program recommendations.

On transfer of inmates to a general population facility, the program review committee (PRC) meets with them to discuss programming needs, assign an institutional job, review the medical and mental health treatment plan, and enroll them in school, if appropriate. WI DOC policy requires a reassessment every 6 months. However, most inmates are reviewed much more frequently because all job assignments, programming, housing assignments, and medical and mental health status changes prompt a PRC hearing. In addition, either the inmate or the classification specialist can request an early recall to consider a custody reduction or transfer to another facility.

In September 2001, a comprehensive onsite assessment was conducted that included interviews with central office and facility-based staff, review of case files, tours of the facilities housing women offenders, observation of initial classification staffing meetings and PRC hearings, and review of the agency's plan, written policies, classification instruments, and needs assessment instruments. In preparation for the onsite activities, the agency plan, briefing papers, and a previous formal assessment of the classification system were reviewed (Austin and Naro, 2000).

A comprehensive onsite assessment was conducted that included interviews with central office and facility-based staff, review of case files, tours of the facilities housing women offenders, observation of initial classification staffing meetings and PRC hearings, and review of the agency's plan, written policies, classification instruments, and needs assessment instruments.

Validation Effort and Key Results

The WI DOC documents and onsite activities clearly indicated that the assessment of the classification process for women offenders completed as part of the agency plan was a realistic examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the process. Overall, the objectives and recommendations outlined in the agency plan were on target and, if fulfilled, would result in a classification process that provides high-quality management of the risks and needs presented by the WI DOC women offender population. Based on current research, the following observations and suggestions were provided to strengthen the agency plan:

- ◆ Update and validate the risk assessment instruments to ensure that they reflect such current risk assessment standards as objectivity and reliability.
- ◆ Develop a systematic, gender-specific needs assessment and reassessment process that provides a complete profile of the women offenders.
- ◆ Develop a clear and concise classification manual to clarify the purpose of the classification process, standardize the timing and reasons for reassessing the inmate or conducting a PRC hearing, and document the operational definitions of all risk and need factors.
- ◆ Provide comprehensive and ongoing classification training to all intake and PRC participants.
- ◆ Develop ongoing auditing and monitoring procedures to track the custody distribution of the population at initial classification and reclassification, monitor the rates of discretionary decisions and overrides, assess the reliability and accuracy of the risk scores and needs assessments, and compare program recommendations with participation rates.
- ◆ Clarify the role of classification within the department to ensure full integration with the operational and treatment practices of the Divisions of Adult Institutions and Community Corrections.
- ◆ Automate the classification process to document the initial assessment and reassessment of risk and needs, the PRC recommendations and approval process, rates and reasons for discretionary decisions and overrides, timing and reasons for reclassifications, and key outcome indicators, such as institutional misconduct, program performance, escapes, and work experiences.

Notes

1. Some of these measures were developed at the University of Cincinnati; others were more established scales.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

2. A literature review identified scales pertaining to relationships and parenting. However, these contained items more appropriate to middle-class lifestyles than those lived by most women offenders. The relationship scale was influenced by the Spann-Fischer Codependency Scale (Fischer, Spann, and Crawford, 1991); the Codependent Questionnaire (Roehling and Gaumond, 1996); and the Silencing the Self Scale (Jack and Dill, 1992). The parenting scale involved slight modifications to a 20-item scale developed by Avison, Turner, and Noh (1986).
3. For a full description of the definition and scoring for each of the 16 risk and needs factors, see Florida Department of Corrections, 1998.
4. Violent offenses included murder and manslaughter, 14.6 percent; sexual offenses, 11 percent; robbery, 14.2 percent; and other violent offenses, 11.9 percent.
5. These data reflect the female inmate population as of June 30, 1999. Violent offenses included murder and manslaughter, 16 percent; sexual offenses, 1 percent; robbery, 8 percent; and other violent offenses, 16 percent (Florida Department of Corrections, 2001b).
6. The analyses suggested, however, that the smaller samples were representative of Hawaii's incarcerated women offenders.
7. The samples included only three offenders who met this criterion. Although none of these women had received a prison misconduct report, our samples were inadequate to test this change.
8. The classification committee includes a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist and a representative from security. Generally, the committee consults with the medical, mental health, and education staff and job coordinators.
9. The Idaho law provides for the court to sentence an individual to prison, yet retain jurisdiction of the case. After 180 days, the case is returned to court for review of the individual's adjustment to prison. At this point, the court has the option of placing the individual on probation or committing her to the custody of the ID DOC. Individuals sentenced under this statute are referred to as "riders."
10. These included 4 percent who were released from maximum custody, 17 percent from medium custody, and 35 percent from minimum custody.
11. The LSI-R is a published assessment available through Multi-Health Systems. It yields community and institutional risk scores as well as scores pertaining to the following needs: education, employment, financial, family/marital, prosocial/antisocial living conditions, use of leisure time, alcohol/drugs, emotional health, and prosocial and antisocial attitudes.
12. Recent population projections indicate that the average length of stay among West Virginia DOC women offenders is 11.2 months and their average sentence is 39.4 months. See Federspiel et al., 2001.

Appendix A

13. The agency plan was formally presented to the WI DOC executive staff in September 2001 and given preliminary endorsement. See Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 2001.

14. A detainer is a legal request by a jurisdiction indicating the offender should be detained because of unresolved cases or sentences; a hold is a request by a criminal justice agency not to release an individual without first notifying it.

References

Andrews, D., and J. Bonta. 1995. *The Level of Supervision Inventory–Revised (LSI–R)*. North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems.

Austin, J., J. Alexander, S. Anuskiewicz, and L. Chin. 1995. *Evaluation of the Colorado Objective Prison Classification System*. San Francisco: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Austin, J., L. Chan, and W. Elms. 1993. *Indiana Department of Corrections: Women Classification Study*. San Francisco, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Austin, J., and W. Naro. 2000. *Assessment of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Inmate Classification System*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Avison, W., R. Turner, and S. Noh. 1986. “Screening for Problem Parenting: Preliminary Evidence on a Promising Instrument.” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 10: 157–170.

Bench, L. 1996. *A Validation of the Hawaii Department of Public Safety Inmate Classification System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Brennan, T. 1998. “Institutional Classification of Females: Problems and Some Proposals for Reform.” In *Female Crime and Delinquency: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions*. Ed. R. Zaplin. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishing, Inc.: 179–204.

Briere, J., and M. Runtz. 1989. “The Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC-33): Early Data on a New Scale.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 4 (2): 151–163.

Campbell, D.W., J. Campbell, C. King, B. Parker, and J. Ryan. 1994. “The Reliability and Factor Structure of the Index of Spouse Abuse With African-American Women.” *Violence and Victims* 9 (3): 259–274.

Coleman, F.L. 1997. “Stalking Behavior and the Cycle of Domestic Violence.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 12 (3): 420–432.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

Federspiel, J.N., D.M. Huck, L.N. Hutzler, and W. Naro. 2001. "Correctional Population Forecast 2000–2010: A Study of the State's Prison Population." Charleston, WV: Division of Criminal Justice Services, and The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Fischer, J., L. Spann, and D. Crawford. 1991. "Measuring Codependency." *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 8: 87–99.

Florida Department of Corrections. 1998. *Risk and Needs System Guide*. Tallahassee: Florida Department of Corrections, Office of Security and Management.

———. 2001a. On the World Wide Web: <http://www.dc.state.fl.us>. Accessed in October 2001.

———. 2001b. "Florida's Women Offenders Plan," www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/Females/status/femaleoff.html. Accessed in 2001.

Hardyman, P.L. 2000. *Assessment of the Florida Department of Corrections Risk and Needs System: An Ambitious Internal Classification Design and Implementation Effort*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., 2001a. *Validation and Refinement of Objective Prison Classification Systems for Women: The Experience of Four States and Common Themes*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

———. 2001b. *Wisconsin Department of Corrections Objective Classification System: Observations and Recommendations for Identifying and Addressing the Gender-Specific Needs of Women Offenders, Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., J. Austin, and O.C. Tulloch. 2000. *Revalidating External Classification Systems: The Experience of Seven States and a Model for Classification Reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., and G. Davies. 2001. *Validation of the West Virginia Division of Correction Objective Classification System for the Female Inmate Population: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Hardyman, P.L., and L. Pearson. 2001. *Revalidation of the Idaho Department of Correction Objective Classification System for the Female Inmate Population: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Appendix A

Hardyman, P.L., and O.C. Tulloch. 2000. *Validation of the Oklahoma Department of Correction Objective Classification System for the Female Inmate Population: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Institute on Crime, Justice and Corrections.

Harer, M., and N. Langan. 2001. "Gender Differences in Predictors of Prison Violence: Assessing the Predictive Validity of a Risk Classification System." *Crime & Delinquency* 47 (4): 513–536.

Holsinger, K., J. Belknap, and J. Sutherland. 1999. "Assessing the Gender Specific Program and Service Needs for Adolescent Females in the Juvenile Justice System." Presented to the State of Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice Services, November.

Jack, D.C., and D. Dill. 1992. "Silencing the Self: Schemas of Intimacy Associated With Depression in Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 16: 97–106.

Lowenkamp, C., A. Holsinger, and E. Latessa. 2001. "Risk/Needs Assessment, Offender Classification, and the Role of Childhood Abuse." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 28: 543–563.

Murphy, C.M., and S.A. Hoover. 1999. "Measuring Emotional Abuse in Dating Relationships as a Multifactorial Construct." *Violence and Victims* 14 (1): 39–53.

Rettinger, L. 1998. "A Recidivism Follow-up Study Investigating Risk and Need Within a Sample of Provincially Sentenced Women." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Ottawa, Ontario: Carleton University.

Rodenburg, F.A., and J.W. Fantuzzo. 1993. "The Measure of Wife Abuse: Steps Toward the Development of a Comprehensive Assessment Technique." *Journal of Family Violence* 8 (3): 203–228.

Roehling, P., and E. Gaumond. 1996. "Reliability and Validity of the Codependent Questionnaire." *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 14 (1): 85–95.

Rosenberg, M. 1979. *The Concept of Self*. New York: Basic Books.

Shephard, M.F., and J.A. Campbell. 1992. "The Abusive Behavior Inventory: A Measure of Psychological and Physical Abuse." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 7 (3): 291–305.

Sherer, M., J. Maddux, B. Mercandante, S. Prentice-Dunn, B. Jacobs, and R. Rogers. 1982. "The Self-Efficacy Scale: Construction and Validation." *Psychological Reports* 51 (2): 663–671.

Van Voorhis, P., and J. Pealer. 2001. *Validation of the Hawaii Department of Public Safety Objective Classification System for Incarcerated Women Offenders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Descriptions of Seven States' Women's Classification Initiatives

Van Voorhis, P., J. Pealer, G. Spiropoulis, and J. Sutherland. 2001. *Validation of Offender Custody Classification and Needs Assessment Systems for Women Offenders in the Colorado Department of Corrections*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections. 2001. *Wisconsin Women Offenders Agency Plan*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Appendix B: Sample Initial and Reclassification Instruments Developed by Colorado and Idaho

OPTION 1

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
WOMEN'S INITIAL CUSTODY RATING

1. HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE (Review individual's entire background of incarceration for three (3) years prior to admission date.)
- None..... 0
 - Assault and Battery, not involving a weapon or serious injury..... 3
 - Assault and Battery against staff or visitors..... 5
 - Assault and Battery involving use of weapon or serious injury..... 10
2. SEVERITY OF CURRENT CONVICTION (Score most serious offense of current conviction).
- Low..... 1
 - Low Moderate..... 2
 - Moderate..... 3
 - High..... 5
 - Highest..... 7
 - If multiple convictions are for High or Highest (add 2 points)
 - If offense resulted in death (add 2 points)
3. SEVERITY OF PRIOR CONVICTIONS (Score most serious in adult history).
- None, low, or low moderate..... 0
 - High..... 4
 - Moderate..... 2
 - Highest..... 6
4. ESCAPE HISTORY (Rate for the last 3 years of incarceration).
- An escape/attempted escape/abscond resulting in administrative actions..... 1
[Not to include walkaways with a voluntary return within 24 hours.]
 - An escape/attempted escape from Level II or below (no violence)..... 2
 - An escape/attempted escape from Level III or above (no violence)..... 6
 - An escape/attempted escape from and facility with violence..... 8
5. LSI Alcohol/Drugs
- 0-1 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 0
 - 2-7 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 1
 - 8-9 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 2
6. PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS
- None..... 0
 - One..... 1
 - 2 of more felonies..... 2
7. CURRENT AGE
- Less than 30..... 2
 - Above 30..... 0
8. EMPLOYMENT
- Employment/in school/full-time parenting 6 months prior to arrest..... 0
 - Not employed..... 1
9. PAROLE ELIGIBILITY DATE
- Over 5 years..... 3
 - 5 years or less..... 0

TOTAL (Items 1 – 9) _____

CLASSIFICATION

Minimum Custody (0-5) _____
Minimum Restrictive Custody (6-10) _____
Medium Custody (11-15) _____
Close Custody (16+) _____

MANDATORY OVERRIDE

Current or pending felony detainer, override to medium custody.

**Model II: The Current System with Two Additional Needs
(Mental Health and Relationships)
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
WOMEN'S INITIAL CUSTODY RATING**

PART A:

1. HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE (Review individual's entire background of incarceration for three (3) years prior to admission date.)
 - None..... 0
 - Assault and Battery, not involving a weapon or serious injury..... 3
 - Assault and Battery against staff or visitors..... 5
 - Assault and Battery involving use of weapon or serious injury..... 10

2. SEVERITY OF CURRENT CONVICTION (Score most serious offense of current conviction.)¹
 - Low..... 1
 - Low Moderate..... 2
 - Moderate..... 3
 - High..... 5
 - Highest..... 7
 - If multiple convictions are for High or Highest (add 2 points)
 - If offense resulted in death (add 2 points)

3. SEVERITY OF PRIOR CONVICTIONS (Score most serious in adult history.)
 - None, low, or low moderate..... 0
 - High..... 4
 - Moderate..... 2
 - Highest..... 6

4. ESCAPE HISTORY (Rate for the last 3 years of incarceration.)
 - No escapes..... 0
 - An escape/attempted escape/abscond resulting in administrative actions..... 1
 - [Not to include walkaways with a voluntary return within 24 hours.]**
 - An escape/attempted escape from Level II or below (no violence)..... 2
 - An escape/attempted escape from Level III or above (no violence)..... 6
 - An escape/attempted escape from and facility with violence..... 8

5. LSI Alcohol/Drugs
 - 0-1 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 0
 - 2-7 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 1
 - 8-9 On LSI Drugs/alcohol..... 2

6. PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS
 - None..... 0
 - One..... 1
 - Two or more..... 2

7. CURRENT AGE
 - Less than 30..... 2
 - Above 30..... 0

8. EMPLOYMENT
 - Employed/in school/full-time parenting 6 months prior to arrest..... 0
 - Not employed..... 1

9. MENTAL HEALTH
 - P1 or P2..... 0
 - P3 or above..... 2

10. RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

Above 22 on needs scale..... 0
21 or below on needs scale..... 1

11. PAROLE ELIGIBILITY DATE

Over 5..... 3
5 years or less..... 0

TOTAL (Items 1-11) _____

CLASSIFICATION

Minimum Custody (0-6) _____
Minimum Restrictive Custody (7-12) _____
Medium Custody (13-18) _____
Close Custody (19+) _____

MANDATORY OVERRIDE

Current or pending felony detainer, override to medium custody.

Non-Discretionary Overrides:

Current or pending felony detainer, override to medium custody.

1. The steering committee considered the option of subtracting points if the offense “was a one time only result of sustained victimization of the offender.” However, committee members noted that Colorado statute mandates initial placement to medium or above custody for violent offenders. Therefore the correction appears on the reclassification instrument but not on the initial classification instrument.

User Feedback Form

Please complete and return this form to assist the National Institute of Corrections in assessing the value and utility of its publications. Detach from the document and mail to:

Publications Feedback
 National Institute of Corrections
 320 First Street N.W.
 Washington, DC 20534

1. What is your general reaction to this document?

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Average _____ Poor _____ Useless

2. To what extent do you see the document as being useful in terms of:

	Useful	Of some use	Not useful
Providing new or important information			
Developing or implementing new programs			
Modifying existing programs			
Administering ongoing programs			
Providing appropriate liaisons			

3. Do you believe that more should be done in this subject area? If so, please specify the types of assistance needed. _____

4. In what ways could this document be improved? _____

5. How did this document come to your attention? _____

6. How are you planning to use the information contained in this document? _____

7. Please check one item that best describes your affiliation with corrections or criminal justice.

If a governmental program, please also indicate the level of government.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ Citizen group | _____ Legislative body |
| _____ College/University | _____ Parole |
| _____ Community corrections | _____ Police |
| _____ Court | _____ Probation |
| _____ Department of corrections or prison | _____ Professional organization |
| _____ Jail | _____ Other government agency |
| _____ Juvenile justice | _____ Other (please specify) |

8. Optional:

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 14045 WASHINGTON DC
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY BUREAU OF PRISONS

**ATTN: PUBLICATIONS FEEDBACK
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONS
320 FIRST ST NW
WASHINGTON DC 20077-8037**



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

