


**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES
JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS**

Subject: Classification System	Policy Number: 2												
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Effective Date: June 1, 2011	Approved:  <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black;"/> Kathy Pittman, Director												

I. **POLICY:** It is the policy of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services (DYS), that a youth's privileges, restrictions, opportunities, and sanctions will be based on demonstrated behavior. Therefore, a Classification System is established to determine housing unit placement based on the youth's risk of chronic or violent misconduct. The Classification System is part of an overall behavior management system which includes the Behavior Incentive System (Policy XIII.10), Behavior Management Isolation (Policy VII.10), Due Process Isolation (Policy VII.11) and Length of Stay calculations (Policy XIII.15). Furthermore, at no time shall a youth's constitutional rights be violated or be forgone as a restriction or punishment for poor behavior.

II. **DEFINITIONS**

As used in this policy and procedure, the following definitions apply:

- A. Constitutional Rights – Liberties to which youth are entitled by mandate of the United States Constitution and Mississippi State Statutes. Examples of such rights include, but are not limited to, access to exercise and fresh air, access to mail, educational programs, medical care, a balanced and nutritional diet, attorney access, and protection from harm.
- B. Privileges – Earned liberties, which may be given or withheld from youth, based on their behavior, including absence of disciplinary incidents, participation in treatment, reaching the criterion on daily point sheets, and progress toward service/treatment team goals. Privileges may include such activities as watching television (e.g., suitable broadcast programs and movies), playing video and electronic games, listening to music (radio and suitable CDs), extending bed times, receiving extra telephone calls, using a personal computer for suitable activities, participating in special recreational activities, and taking trips off campus.
- C. Classification System – An objective system composed of a progressive series of environmental structures, each of which afford a specific level of supervision and

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freedom of movement throughout the facility. This system is a fundamental component of the overall behavior management system, in which youth are methodically classified based on their scores on a number of factors, including but not limited to: history of assault, history of escape, major and minor disciplinary infractions, performance and/or participation in scheduled activities and programs, and the prescribed length of stay. (See Length of Stay Policy XIII.15.) The Classification System is intended to provide limits, supervision, and surveillance corresponding to the student's need for structure in daily living in order to reduce the risk for violence, aggressive and destructive behavior, and elopement while residing at Oakley Youth Development Center.

- D. Service Plan – A detailed, written plan addressing the goals, objectives, timelines, and staff assignments which comprises a youth's rehabilitative program. The plan shall address areas of high risk/need, and promote pro-social behavior. The Service Plan is a holistic and comprehensive document that also addresses the youth's recreational, educational, vocational, medical, mental health, family and transitional needs. Service plans are described in detail in Policy XIII.5.
- E. Treatment Team – An appointed group of staff members responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of a youth's Service Plan. This Team shall monitor the youth's progress and revise the youth's Service Plan as needed. The Team shall also be responsible for linking the youth to the appropriate programming and resources to address individual risks and/or needs. Data used in deliberations regarding the youth's Behavior Incentive System stage are documented using the Treatment Team Meeting Form. The Treatment Team refers youth to the Classification Committee to determine appropriate changes to the youth's housing unit. The Classification Committee considers the Treatment Team's input and completes the Reclassification checklist to determine the appropriate subsequent housing unit. Treatment Team composition and process are described in Policy XIII.4.
- F. Behavior Management System – The overall use of rewards and consequences to modify and/or manage the behavior, conduct and culture observed by youth housed at Oakley Youth Development Center.
- G. Classification Committee – A group of designated mental health supervisors who meet to determine the temporary and/or permanent housing assignment for all students committed to the Oakley Youth Development Center. The Committee consists of a Coordinator, counselor supervisors, and representatives from rehabilitation, recreation, education, and direct care. If the youth is receiving mental health care, the qualified mental health provider (QMHP) will be consulted and shall either attend the committee meeting or provide written input. The Committee makes initial housing unit assignments based on the youth's score on the Initial Classification Checklist. Requests for subsequent housing transfers are submitted to the Committee by the youth's Treatment Team, based on the youth's performance in the Behavior Incentive System and involvement in misconduct. These requests are assessed by the Classification Committee using the Reclassification Checklist. The Classification Committee Coordinator prepares a Classification Form documenting all input and the recommended Classification status. The Classification Form is presented to the facility

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administrator or designee for approval. If approved, the change in placement is implemented by means of the DYS Student Transfer form.

- H. Initial Classification Checklist (XIII.2.A) – An instrument consisting of 12 items related to the risk of violent or chronic institutional misconduct. The checklist is used by the Classification Committee to determine each youth’s need for structure in housing upon their admission to the Oakley Youth Development Center. The Committee will use a youth’s score on the checklist to assign him to a placement housing unit with high, medium, or low structure.

- I. Reclassification Checklist (XIII.2.B) – An instrument consisting of 6 items related to the risk of violent or chronic institutional misconduct. The reclassification checklist is used to adjust a youth’s classification status and housing unit assignment based on the youth’s behavior and involvement in programming. The reclassification checklist is completed by the classification coordinator, upon a referral by the youth’s Treatment Team. Students who are advancing in the Behavior Incentive System stages may be referred in order to reduce the level of structure of their assigned housing unit. Students who are involved in chronic or violent institutional misconduct may be referred in order to increase the level of structure of their assigned housing unit.

- J. Classification Over-ride (XIII.2.C) –Placement on Special Management Units and the Honors Program Unit require application processes covered in their respective policies. Students may be admitted to these special programs based on criteria established for admission and upon approval by the facility administrator or his designee. Applications for admission to the Special Management Units will be reviewed by the Classification Committee for completeness and compatibility with institutional requirements and resources.

- K. Classification Form (XIII.2.D) – The Classification Form records the input of the multidisciplinary Classification Committee members. It includes any special mental health concerns or accommodations, identifies the Classification Committee’s recommended classification status (high, moderate or low), and the Administrative approval of the recommendation. The facility administrator or designee must approve the recommendations of the committee/team before the youth is moved to a housing unit.

- L. DYS Student Transfer Form (XIII.2.E) – The DYS Student Transfer form is completed by the Classification Committee to officially assign a youth to a housing unit. The facility administrator or designee must approve the transfer before it occurs.

- M. Management Team - A subset of the Treatment Team, which is an appointed group of staff members responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of a youth’s determined Service Plan. The Management Team includes at least the counselor/unit coordinator, the QMHP (if the student is receiving mental health treatment), a direct care staff and a representative of education. Additional staff members may attend the scheduled Management Team meetings and participate in decision-making regarding referrals for reclassification. Management team meetings

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occur in between Treatment Team meetings, which are generally devoted to developing initial Service Plans and 30-day updates of Service Plans.

- N. **Environmental Structure**—Environmental structure refers to the physical and behavioral limits of a unit that are used to help youth accomplish behavior change goals. Restriction to a designated space in the housing unit may help a particular youth focus on immediate behavior change goals. Less restrictive environments afford opportunities for practicing decision-making, problem-solving, coping, and on-task behaviors that are self-managed by students. Environmental structure varies on a continuum from physical restriction to open space, staff regulation of youth behavior to youth regulation of their own behavior, and contingency management of rule-governed behavior to self-management of free behavior. Therefore, environmental structure refers to consequences of rule-breaking at OYDC and to the privileges afforded students at different stages of the Behavior Incentive System. The structures afforded in the housing units of the center include High, Medium, and Low Structure. Particulars of environmental structure will vary according to the availability of housing units at the center.
1. High Structure occurs in a housing unit affording medium security, surveillance, and staff control. They feature:
 - a. Locked doors at all times
 - b. Close visual contact
 - c. Fixed schedule
 - d. Staff direction of all activities
 - e. Restricted movement under careful supervision
 - f. Limited access to supplies and resources
 - g. Closely supervised educational services in the academic setting
 - h. Minimum recreation in secure settings

 2. Medium Structure affords some opportunities for freedom of choice, youth input in decision-making, access to rewards, and enhanced recreational activities. These units feature:
 - a. Locked doors during sleeping hours and designated time periods in the pods
 - b. General visual contact
 - c. Choice in some scheduled leisure activities
 - d. Staff guidance with youth input
 - e. Regular movement with staff supervision
 - f. Access to some supplies and resources including games and electronics
 - g. Movement to the academic area for school
 - h. Some free recreation including trips to Unit II gymnasium

 3. Low Structure affords greatest opportunities for freedom of choice, youth input in decision-making, access to rewards, and enhanced recreational activities in order to simulate a dormitory-like environment. These units feature:
 - a. Unlocked doors at night and during designated time periods
 - b. Visual and verbal contacts as needed
 - c. Choice in most scheduled leisure activities

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- d. Student involvement in planning activities whenever possible (e.g., store manager or peer facilitator roles)
- e. Regular movement with staff supervision
- f. Access to enhanced supplies and resources including games and electronics
- g. Movement to the academic area for school
- h. Off-campus recreational and service activities

III. PROCEDURE

A. Intake and Orientation - The initial housing unit will be maintained while the student completes orientation and classification processes in the Intake Management Unit (IMU) or the Assessment Management Unit (AMU). Typically, Intake and Orientation is maintained for the first 48-72 hours after admission. Students in the Intake and Orientation process receive the minimum privileges that are guaranteed by statute, including one hour of recreation per day. While in the orientation process the student is expected to complete all assignments, follow the daily schedule and housing unit rules, and read and discuss the Student Handbook with a staff member . The student is restricted to the unit and does not participate in the Behavioral Incentive System. Rights, responsibilities, privileges, and daily activities of Stage O are presented in the following policies: Admission, Intake and Orientation Policy XIII.1; Intake Management Unit Policy XIII.6; Assessment Management Unit Policy XIII.16).

B. Initial Classification – Classification of all youth shall take place during the Intake and Orientation period. Following the youth’s admission to the OYDC, the Classification Committee shall complete the initial Classification Checklist (Attachment A) to determine the youth’s classification status and appropriate housing unit.

C. Referral for Reclassification - The Treatment Team or Management Team shall review each youth’s progress toward Service Plan goals; participation in the interventions intended to address the goals; change in behaviors measured by objective indicators; and frequency and severity of each youth’s recent history of behavior management isolation, due process isolation, in school suspension, and other disciplinary actions or cautions recorded on daily point sheets according to the Behavior Incentive System (Policy XIII.10). The Team will review the available data for the period since the last change in the Behavior Incentive System stage as criteria for referring the youth for reclassification to either increase or decrease the security of the assigned housing unit.

D. Reclassification - Upon referral by the Treatment Team, the housing unit coordinator completes the Reclassification Checklist to determine whether an increase or decrease in the youth’s housing unit security is warranted. If a change to the youth’s housing unit is recommended, the Coordinator completes the Classification Form and the DYS Student Transfer form for approval by the facility administrator. Approval of all reclassifications shall follow a standard protocol:

1. Treatment Team Referrals to the Classification Committee are transmitted along with Treatment Team Meeting Forms and other relevant documentation.

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2. The Classification Coordinator compiles a list of the youth referred for reclassification for the next scheduled meeting of the Classification Committee. Unit coordinators, QMHPs, and other stakeholders are invited to the Classification Committee meeting.
3. Classification Committee meetings are scheduled in the morning so that proposed changes in housing units may be reviewed and approved by the Facility Administrator or designee in time for changes to be implemented in the afternoon.
4. The Classification Form and DYS Student Transfer Form shall be completed, signed and submitted by the Classification Committee and forwarded to the Facility Administrator or designee for review and signature.
5. Youth may challenge their classification and unit placement by appealing to the Facility Administrator via the Grievance Process.

E. Documentation – A copy of all forms shall be kept in the Master File, as well as, all modifications to a youth’s classification shall be entered into the automated case management system. The counselor shall be the person responsible for assuring that the proper documentation occurs.

F. Administrative Review – The Facility Administrator or a designee shall review and approve all changes in a youth’s classification. However, the day-to-day management of the Classification System shall be the responsibility of the Classification Coordinator. Behavior Management Isolation is managed by direct care staff. Due Process Isolation is administered by the Disciplinary Hearing Officer. The Classification Committee reviews the completeness of documentation, including Treatment Team Meeting Forms, to ensure there is adequate justification for requested changes in classification. The Clinical Director of Rehabilitative and Mental Health Care Services is responsible for conducting quarterly audits of records for internal quality assurance to ensure that practices conform to policy.

G. Training – Staff will receive training as follows:

1. Initial training - All staff having regular contact with youth at a training school will receive pre-service (initial) training in the Classification System policy, as well as other policies, procedures, and protocols associated with behavior management in the institution.
2. In-service training - In-service training requirements will be determined annually through the training needs assessment process. (For more information about training see Policy IV.1 – Training Management.)