

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

**Policy Name:** Security Classification

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| <b>Policy Number:</b> 220.02      | <b>Effective Date:</b> 12/08/2023                   | <b>Page Number:</b> 1 of 6                                   |
| <b>Authority:</b><br>Commissioner | <b>Originating Division:</b><br>Facilities Division | <b>Access Listing:</b><br>Level II: Required Offender Access |

**I. Introduction and Summary:**

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) administers a Security Classification instrument to all offenders to assess institutional risk and recommend a Security Classification level of close, medium, or minimum security. The goal of this process is to protect the public by operating safe and secure facilities while ensuring the protection and safety of GDC staff, contractors, visitors, and other offenders. A valid and reliable assessment of offender institutional risk assists staff in maximizing the utilization of GDC facility assets and programing resources. This policy is applicable to all state, private county facilities and transitional centers.

**II. Authority:**

- A. Ga. Comp. R. & Regs. 125-2-4-.03 and 125-3-1-.02.
- B. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 107.04 Risks and Needs Assessment, 207.04 Offender Work Details, 209.01 Offender Discipline, 222.01 Inter-Institutional Transfers, 209.06 Administrative Segregation, and 508.21 Treatment Plans.
- C. ACA Standards: 5-ACI-5B-01, 5-ACI-5B-03, 5-ACI-5B-04, 5-ACI-5B-06, 2-CO-4B-03, and 5-ACI-5A-02.

**III. Definitions:**

- A. **Security Classification** - A comprehensive measure of institutional risk factors is used to determine appropriate housing, levels of supervision, and work detail assignments.
- B. **Exception Review** - A Classification Review performed to determine if new circumstances warrant the submission of an immediate security review and Override to justify changing the offender's Security Classification.

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C. **Override** - Upon analysis and investigation, an Override may result in the evaluator recommending a higher or lower custody level status. This consideration is beyond any mandatory considerations within the classification instrument; along with the reviewer's assessment regarding an offender's observed and documented behavior.

D. **Threshold/Override Review** - A Threshold/Override Review is conducted every twelve (12) months on those offenders whose security level was the result of an Override or when the offender's system-generated security level changes by crossing the threshold from one security level to another.

**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

Security Classification: Upon placement into the custody of GDC, the Security Classification Instrument, Next Generation Assessment (NGA), generates a security level in SCRIBE for each offender. The Security Classification Instrument is an automated system that analyzes several factors. Each factor is assigned a unique weight and processed by an algorithm that produces a security level. The identified security level is reviewed by the Warden-Superintendent/Designee for final approval and comment if necessary. The Security Classification instrument requires a one-level analysis of the system-generated security level by the Warden/Superintendent or Designee to review and approve.

The designee shall be one of the following: Chief Counselor, S.I.P. Coordinator, Deputy Warden of Care Treatment (at some facilities this is the Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment/Security), Assistant Superintendent, Diagnostic Director (if applicable) or the Deputy Warden of Security. Security Classification reviews shall be completed directly in SCRIBE by the Warden/Superintendent or Designee and not on paper to be entered later by other staff.

The Warden/Superintendent or Designee shall review the system-generated security level and determine if it is appropriate. If appropriate, they shall confirm this security level in SCRIBE. This process will finalize the security level.

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If Warden/Superintendent or Designee does not concur, an Override request can be submitted to change the security level. The system allows for a limited number of request Overrides. The request is submitted through SCRIBE which will produce a list of acceptable Override reasons. Supporting comments are necessary to facilitate a change in security status. Comments should include supporting data, justification for the request, and details citing documented information. Central Office will review and has final authority.

- A. System-Generated Security Level Changes: System-generated changes to an offender's security level shall be through the Security Classification application in SCRIBE. The Warden-Superintendent/Designee shall refer, periodically, to the Warden's/Superintendent's Queue in SCRIBE to ensure that changes to an offender's security level are processed within ten (10) business days of the offender's arrival at the facility. The Warden-Superintendent/Designee, also, shall ensure that changes to the offender's security level are appropriate.
- B. Recommended Custody Level Override: As outlined above (IV.A) the Warden-Superintendent/Designee shall review the security assessment of each offender under GDC supervision. If upon conclusion of their review, the Warden-Superintendent/Designee determines that the system-generated security level is not appropriate, an Override can be submitted. The Override process is completed in full and submitted through the Security Classification application in SCRIBE. Specific attention shall be made to document in detail the justification and provide an alternative security recommendation.
- C. Central Office Override Review: Designated staff in Central Office/ Facility Operations shall review and approve all Override requests. These reviews shall be completed within ten (10) business days upon submission of the Override. If during the review, questions arise or the submission needs further clarification, the reviewers shall contact whoever submitted the Override. Final decisions are entered into the SCRIBE Security Classification application and if a change is approved, the new security level shall be displayed in the offender's SCRIBE record.

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D. Non-Discretionary Override: Offenders serving certain sentences are subject to specific restrictions in terms of the assigned security level and shall conform to a specific security level regardless of the system-generated security level in SCRIBE.

1. Upon the Security Classification review by the Warden-Superintendent/Designee, an Override can only be submitted following guidelines outlined above in IV.B. These non-discretionary over-ride considerations include:

- a. Life Without Parole: The security level of an offender sentenced to Life Without Parole shall never be lower than CLOSE.
- b. Under Death Sentence: Offenders currently under Death Sentence shall never be reduced and must remain CLOSE security.
- c. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detainer: Offenders with an active Detainer from the ICE shall never receive a security level lower than MEDIUM.
- d. Time Restriction: Offenders serving sentences that exceed 15 years, to include Life with Parole, shall never receive a security level lower than MEDIUM. An Override can be requested to reduce or raise an offender's security level, but it shall never go below MEDIUM security.
- e. Sex Offender: The security level of an offender whose current sentence is a sex offense shall never be lower than MEDIUM. If the offender has been identified as a sexual predator, then that offender's security level shall never be below CLOSE.
- f. Escape/Abscond History: Offenders who have had a sentence and/or Disciplinary Report for an escape or escape attempt from inside a secure facility within the past five years or serving sentences for abscond, escape,

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or attempting to abscond/escape from a Transitional Center within the past two years, shall never receive a security level lower than MEDIUM. An Override can be requested for such offenders to reduce or raise an offender's security level, but again it shall never go below MEDIUM security.

**Threshold/Override Reviews:** Security Threshold/Override Reviews shall be conducted when there are behavioral or operational reasons to submit an Override to change security level. The following are examples:

1. An offender whose security level was established by an Override.
  2. An offender whose security level was set as a result of an Exception Review, resulting from an extra-ordinary event as noted below.
  3. An offender's security level crosses over the established security scale threshold from one level to another, i.e., from medium security to close security or from close security to medium security; and/or
  4. An offender's behavior warrants a security level change. (Follow the process outlined above in IV.B)
- E. **Exception Reviews:** Exception security reviews may be initiated whenever GDC staff recognizes the need. The following circumstances are examples that provide cause to complete an Exception Review:
1. **Crime of Violence:** Any act which involved killing or serious assault, including an aggravated sexual act, taking part in a riot, kidnapping, and hostage-taking.
  2. **Major Prison/Center Infraction:** Conviction of any disciplinary infraction which falls in the "greatest" severity category, (SOP 209.01 Attachment 5) or conviction of three (3) or more "high" severity infractions for assaultive

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behavior, high value contraband, weapons and/or drugs, within ninety (90) days.

3. Major Threat to Institutional Operations: Current information identifying an offender to be a major threat to institutional operations, i.e., STG leader.

V. **Attachments:** None.

VI. **Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:** None.