

<p style="text-align: center;">GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Standard Operating Procedures</p>		
Policy Name: Special Management Unit – Tier III Segregated Transition Education Program (Tier III STEP)		
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Authority: Commissioner	Originating Division: Facilities Division	Access Listing: Level II: Required Offender Access

I. Introduction and Summary:

The Special Management Unit – Tier III Segregated Transition Education Program (Tier III STEP) is a step-down program for offenders who have successfully completed the Tier III Program. The Tier III STEP is an incentive program based on an increased level of privileges for demonstrated appropriate offender behavior and program compliance. The goal of Tier III STEP is to successfully transition these offenders from the Tier III Program to general population in a safe, secure manner within ninety (90) days.

The Tier III STEP is not a restrictive housing unit.

II. Authority:

- A. Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 203.03, Incident Reports; 204.10, Offender Use of the Goal Device and J-Pay Kiosk; 228.01, Safety and Sanitation Inspection; 227.03, Access to Courts; 227.05, Visitation of Offenders; 222.10, Security Procedures during Transport of Offenders; 227.01, Offender Access to Telephones; 226.01 Searches, Security Inspections, and Use of Permanent Logs; 207.01, Offender Work Details; 206.01, Offender Personal Property Standards; 209.01, Offender Discipline; 209.04, Use of Force and Restraint for Offender Control; 209.09, Special Management Unit – Tier III Program; 209.05, Stripped Cells and Temporary Confiscation of Personal Property; 220.04, Offender Orientation; 219.01, Case Management-Records Maintenance; 220.02, Security Classification; 220.03, Classification Committee; 221.01, Inter-Institutional Transfer; 107.05, Program Management; 508.27, MH Organization and Administration; 508.15, MH Evaluations; 508.27, Time Out and Physical Restraint; 508.28, Managing Potentially Suicidal/Self Injurious and Aggressive Behavior; 508.20, MH Rounds in Isolation/Administrative Segregation Units; 508.30, MH Acute Care Unit; 209.08, Administrative Segregation: Tier II Program; and 409.04.28, Alternative Entrée Meal, and
- B. A.C.A. Standards: 4-4249, 4-4250, 4-4251, 4-4252, 4-4253, 4-4254, 4-4255, 4-4256, 4-4257, 4-4258, 4-4259, 4-4260, 4-4261, 4-4262, 4-4263, 4-4264, 4-4265, 4-4266, 4-4267, 4-4268, 4-4269, 4-4270, 4-4271, 4-4272, and 4-4273.

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III. Definitions:

- A. **Special Management Unit – Tier III Segregated Transition Education Program (Tier III STEP)** - For the purpose of this policy, a step-down program for offenders who have successfully completed the Tier III program.
- B. **Tier III Classification Committee** - The Institutional Classification Committee created in SOP 220.03, Classification Committee: The group of staff appointed by the Warden to review offender progress through the SMU Tier III STEP. A security member of the Committee also conducts any disciplinary hearings for offenders assigned to the Tier III STEP. At a minimum, the committee shall include: (1) the Tier III STEP Unit Manager; (2) a Mental Health (MH) Counselor or other MH Professional; (3) a General Population Counselor; and (4) the Deputy Warden of Security.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Overview:

- 1. An offender assigned to the Tier III STEP is given the opportunity to progress through the program based upon his or her behavior and ability to adjust under reduced levels of supervision.
- 2. The Tier III STEP is a ninety (90) day program. If the offender successfully completes the program, he or she will be considered for reassignment to general population with a Close Security classification.
- 3. All offenders assigned to the Tier III STEP are classified as Close Security.

B. Tier III STEP Orientation:

- 1. Within seven (7) calendar days of arrival at the Tier III STEP, the counselor assigned to Tier III STEP must provide the offender with an orientation program.
- 2. The orientation must contain the following:
 - a. A review of the overall rules governing offender behavior within the Tier III STEP;

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- b. A review of the rules, expectations, and privileges governing the program; and
- c. A description of the periodic review process that determines if the offender progresses out of Tier III STEP or remains in Tier III STEP (found in Paragraph VI.E of this SOP).

C. Conditions and Privileges in the Tier III STEP:

1. Subject to the ordinary restrictions that apply as a result of offender misconduct, the following general rules apply:
 - a. All cells are single occupancy.
 - b. All cells must be equipped and furnished in a manner consistent with cells in the general population.
 - c. Each offender must be provided the opportunity shower and shave three (3) times per week.
 - d. Each offender must be provided prescribed medication, clothing that is not degrading, and access to basic personal items for use in their cells unless there is imminent danger that an offender will destroy an item or induce self-injury.
 - e. Toiletries and personal hygiene items must be provided on the same basis as the general population
 - f. Food provided to offenders in the Tier III STEP must be the same quality and quantity as that provided in the general population. Special or substitute meals shall be handled in accordance with SOP 409.04.28, Alternative Entrée Meal.
 - g. Offenders will be allowed out of their cells in manageable groups.
 - h. Offenders will receive a minimum of four (4) hours out of cell time per day, seven (7) days per week. The four (4) hours out of cell time can cumulative by a combination of recreation, visitation (except visits by the offender's legal team), detail assignment, shower, feeding, Scribe schedule, etc. This time must be outside the cells unless security or safety considerations dictate

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otherwise. Offenders are not required to participate in out of cell time if they choose. Any such refusal to participate shall be documented on the offender's door sheet.

Note: Denial of out of cell time as punishment will not be allowed unless the offender has committed a "Great" or higher severity level disciplinary offense, during out of cell time or during transport to or from out of cell time.

- i. Offenders will be offered a minimum of one (1) hour per day seven (7) days per week for exercise/recreation unless safety or security concerns exist. The one (1) hour of exercise/recreation can be included in the out of cell time noted above.

Note: Denial of recreation time as punishment will not be allowed unless the offender has committed a "Great" or higher severity level disciplinary offense, during transport to or from recreation.

- j. Offenders must be provided the same bedding supplies as are provided offenders in the general population.
- k. Offenders must be provided the same laundry and barbering services and are issued and exchanged clothing on the same basis as offenders in general population. Exceptions are permitted only when found necessary by the Warden or designee; any exception shall be recorded in the unit log and justified in writing.
- l. Offenders must receive the services of a counselor. A single case manager will be assigned to the offenders in the Tier III STEP. This counselor will be responsible for the admissions and orientation process, initial classification preparation, and case plan review.
- m. Offenders will receive all educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programs that can be provided within the confines of the Tier III STEP, consistent with the security needs of the unit. Offenders in the STEP Program shall have the same access to the G.O.A.L. Device and the J-Pay Kiosk as that of the general population.

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- n. Offenders will be allowed to make telephone calls, unless this privilege has been revoked, during their recreation time. All telephone calls are limited to 15-minutes in duration.
- o. The Warden or designee will deal with emergency telephone calls on a case-by-case basis. The highest-ranking official present may authorize an emergency call for a serious illness or death of a family member if the Warden or designee is not available. The staff member who authorizes the call must verify and document that the situation warrants an emergency call.
- p. All visits will be no less than two (2) hours in duration, unless security or safety considerations dictate otherwise, and will be non-contact.
- q. All offenders in the Tier III STEP must be allowed legal access as provided in SOP 227.03, Access to Courts.
- r. All offenders in the Tier III STEP shall have access to Chaplaincy Services. An offender may make a request for Chaplaincy Services in case of an emergency, death in family, serious illness, injury to a family member, divorce, or other such family trauma. The request can be made to any available officer or staff member. The officer or staff member receiving the request shall notify the facility Chaplain of the request as soon as possible. Religious materials are available upon request to the Chaplain, including approved religious texts, and books on a variety of subjects and services. Volunteers from religious organizations may visit with offenders and conduct religious services for individuals or small groups of STEP Program offenders at the discretion of the Warden or designee.
- s. All offenders in the Tier III STEP must be allowed access to reading materials through the institution's library upon request. Use of the mobile book carts may be utilized.
- t. All offenders shall have access to write and receive letters on the same basis as offenders in general population.
- u. Offenders will be checked on and documented every thirty (30) minutes, utilizing Attachment 6.

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2. Privileges available to offenders in the Tier III STEP will be same as general population.
- D. Orderlies in the Tier III STEP: The Tier III STEP will have Tier III STEP offenders assigned as orderlies within the unit that will perform duties consistent with their status and subject to the safety and security of the unit.
- E. Progression through the Tier III STEP:
1. 30-day Review Hearing:
 - a. At least every thirty (30) days the Tier III STEP Classification Committee must review the offender's status and make a recommendation to the Warden or designee utilizing Attachment 2, 30-Day Review Hearing Form. This recommendation is to determine if the offender is:
 - 1) On track to exit the Tier III STEP within ninety (90) days; or
 - 2) Not making adequate progress in the Tier III STEP and may not be ready to exit the Tier III STEP within ninety (90) days.
 - b. If circumstances warrant, the Warden or designee may convene the Tier III STEP Classification Committee at an earlier time. These circumstances include exemplary behavior or significant misbehavior.
 - c. As part of this 30-day Review, the Tier III STEP Classification Committee must offer the offender an opportunity for a hearing, which must include:
 - 1) At least 48-hours before the hearing, the offender must be served with a copy of the 30-Day Review Hearing Form, Attachment 2, with the Tier III STEP Classification Committee's observations over the prior 30 days;
 - 2) The offender has the right to attend the hearing. The offender may forfeit this right if he or she is disruptive, and this disruption shall be documented;

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- 3) The offender may make a statement and present documents. However, the offender does not have the right to call witnesses; and
 - 4) The offender has the right to submit a written statement.
 - d. The Tier III Classification Committee must consider the following factors when formulating its recommendation:
 - 1) Length of time in TIER III STEP;
 - 2) Continued facility risk;
 - 3) Number, type, and frequency of disciplinary reports;
 - 4) Involvement in self-improvement activities;
 - 5) Behavior as documented on offender's Checklist (Attachment 7 of this SOP);
 - 6) Progress on the offender's Management Plan; and
 - 7) The offender's demeanor with staff during periodic reviews.
 - e. The Tier III STEP Classification Committee will make a recommendation based on the above criteria and forward to the Warden or designee within three (3) business days.
 - f. Upon receipt of the 30-Day Review Hearing Form, Attachment 2, the Warden or designee shall review and render the final decision with three (3) business days. The Warden or designee final decision shall be provided to the offender, who will acknowledge receipt of the final decision on the 30-Day Review Hearing Form, Attachment 2.
2. 30-Day Review Hearing Appeal:
- a. Appeals of the 30-Day Review Hearing will only be considered by the Warden or designee. If the final approved recommendation on the 30-day

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Review Hearing Form is that the offender is not making adequate progress in the Tier III STEP and may not be ready to exit the Tier III STEP within ninety (90) days, then the offender may submit written objections to the recommendation using Attachment 3, 30-Day Review Appeal Form.

- b. The offender shall have three (3) business days to provide the 30-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 3, to the offender's assigned counselor, who will sign and date that the appeal was received. The offender shall sign and date the 30-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 3, acknowledging that the counselor has received the appeal. The assigned counselor will provide a copy of the signed 30-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 3, to the offender.
 - c. The counselor will send Attachment 3, 30-Day Review Appeal Form to the Warden within three (3) calendar days of receipt from the offender.
 - d. The Warden or designee shall have three (3) business days to review the offender's appeal and render a final decision on whether the offender is making adequate progress and is on track to exit Tier III STEP within ninety (90) days or is not making adequate progress in the Tier III STEP and may not be ready to exit the Tier III STEP within ninety (90) days. The Warden or designee final decision shall be provided to the offender, who will acknowledge receipt of the final decision on the 30-Day Review Hearing Appeal Form, Attachment 3.
3. 90-Day Review Hearing:
- a. After ninety (90) days in the Tier III STEP, the Tier III STEP Classification Committee must review the offender's status and make a recommendation to the Warden or designee. This recommendation is to determine if the offender will:
 - 1) Remain in the Tier III STEP for specified period up to another ninety (90) days; or
 - 2) Be moved to General Population.

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- b. This review must be documented on the 90-day Review Hearing Form, Attachment 4. The Tier III STEP Classification Committee must give specific reasons for its recommendation.
 - c. The Tier III STEP Classification Committee must consider the following factors when formulating its recommendation:
 - 1) Length of time in program;
 - 2) Perceived risk of release from Tier III STEP;
 - 3) Number, type, and frequency of disciplinary reports;
 - 4) Involvement in self-improvement activities;
 - 5) The two (2) prior final 30-Day Reviewing Hearing Forms;
 - 6) Behavior as documented on offender's Checklist (Attachment 7) of this SOP); and
 - 7) Progress on the Offender's Management Plan.
4. If the Tier III STEP Classification Committee recommends the offender return to General Population:
 - a. If the Tier III STEP Classification Committee recommends the offender return to general population, the 90-Day Review Form, Attachment 4, shall be forwarded to the Warden. The Warden must review and make a recommendation within seven (7) calendar days.
 - b. The Warden shall forward his or her recommendation on the 90-day Review Form, Attachment 2 to the Director, Field Operations (or designee). The Warden must include in detail all sufficient information for the recommendation.

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- c. The Director, Field Operations (or designee) will approve or disapprove the offender returning to general population. A decision must be rendered within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the 90-Day Review Form, Attachment 4.
 - d. If the offender is approved for assignment to general population, the Director, Field Operations (or designee) shall submit the request to Offender Administration to initiate the transfer.
 - e. If the Director, Field Operations (or designee) disapproves the return to general population, the offender must be served with a copy of the 90-day Review Form, Attachment 4, and advised he or she is being denied assignment to general population.
 - f. The offender may submit a formal appeal with utilizing Attachment 5, 90-Day Review Appeal Form. The appeal must be submitted to the Director, Field Operations (or designee). (See IV.E(6)).
5. If the Tier III STEP Classification Committee recommends the offender remain in Tier III STEP:
 - a. If the Tier III STEP Classification Committee recommends the offender remain in Tier III STEP, the Tier III STEP Classification Committee shall make a recommendation on how many days (up to an additional 90) that the offender should remain in Tier III STEP on the 90-Day Review Form, Attachment 4. Tier III STEP Classification Committee shall forward the 90-Day Review Form, Attachment 4 to the Warden. The Warden must review and make a recommendation within seven (7) calendar days.
 - b. The Warden shall forward his or her recommendation on the 90-day Review Form, Attachment 4 to the Director, Field Operations (or designee). The Warden must include in detail all sufficient information for the recommendation.
 - c. The Director, Field Operations (or designee) will approve or disapprove the offender remaining in Tier III STEP and will document how many days (up to an additional 90 days) the offender will remain in Tier III STEP. A decision

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must be rendered within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the 90-Day Review Form, Attachment 4.

- d. If the offender is disapproved to remain in the Tier III STEP and is released to general population, the Director, Field Operations (or designee) shall submit the request to Offender Administration to initiate the transfer.
 - e. If the Director, Field Operations (or designee) approves the offender remaining in Tier III STEP, the offender must be served with a copy of the 90-day Review Form, Attachment 4, and advised he or she is being retained in the Tier III STEP.
 - f. The offender may submit a formal appeal with utilizing Attachment 5, 90-Day Review Appeal Form. The appeal must be submitted to the Director, Field Operations (or designee). (See IV.E(6)).
6. 90-Day Review Hearing Appeal:
- a. The offender shall have five (5) business days to provide the 90-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 5, to the offender's assigned counselor, who will sign and date that the appeal was received. The offender shall sign and date the 90-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 5, acknowledging that the counselor has received the appeal. The assigned counselor will provide a copy of the signed 90-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 5, to the offender.
 - b. The counselor will send Attachment 5, 90-Day Review Appeal Form to the Director, Field Operations within three (3) calendar days of receipt from the offender.
 - c. The Director, Field Operations (or designee) shall have three (3) business days to review the offender's appeal and approve or disapprove assignment to general population. If the offender's appeal is denied, the Director, Field Operations (or designee) shall forward the offender's appeal and any supporting documents to the Assistant Commissioner for Facilities within three (3) business days.

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- d. The Assistant Commissioner for Facilities shall have three (3) business days to review the offender's appeal and approve or disapprove assignment to general population. The Assistant Commissioner for Facilities' decision is final. The Assistant Commissioner for Facilities final decision shall be provided to the offender, who will acknowledge receipt of the final decision on the 90-Day Review Appeal Form, Attachment 5.

V. Attachments:

Attachment 1: SMU Tier III STEP Assignment Form
Attachment 2: SMU Tier III STEP 30-day Review Hearing Form
Attachment 3: SMU Tier III STEP 30-day Review Hearing Appeal Form
Attachment 4: SMU Tier III STEP 90-day Review Hearing Form
Attachment 5: SMU Tier III STEP 90-day Review Hearing Appeal Form
Attachment 6: SMU Tier III STEP Checklist and 30 or 15 Minute Watch Observation Record
Attachment 7: SMU Tier III Performance Recording Sheet

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:

Upon completion, Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 shall be placed in the offenders institutional file and shall be retained according to the official records retention schedule of that file.