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Management of Step-Down Programs

The purpose of Step-Down Programs is to provide inmates transferred to maximum security a safe and secure way to earn their return to lower security. Upon arrival, inmates will be evaluated to determine appropriate housing needs and assessed to identify their level of social functioning and motivation to change. Inmates that are identified as general population and are motivated to change problematic behavior will be afforded the opportunity to participate in programming intended to result in lower security placement.

Step-Down Programs will be comprised of components that are designed to address criminal thinking and encourage pro-social behaviors. Programs will consist of four phases that are progressively less restrictive with Phase I being the most restrictive and Phase IV the least restrictive.

Consistent demonstration of pro-social behaviors will be essential to participate in increased programming, jobs and other out of cell activities. Positive behavior and interaction will result in additional privileges. Negative behavior will result in fewer privileges.

Inmates will be presented opportunities to progress to the least restrictive phase prior to being considered for job assignment or transfer to lower security. All inmates will be required to successfully double-cell prior to participating in Phase programming and/or transfer from maximum security.

This procedure does not create any inmate right. This procedure has been established as an administrative process and for guidance to staff.

I. Definitions

A. Interdisciplinary Treatment Plan (ITP)

An individualized plan that is based on screening and assessment results outlining specific goals and objectives and components of programming to be completed.

B. Review Team

A multi-disciplinary group responsible to identify appropriate program participants, provide planning recommendations and monitor program progress.

C. Structured Activities

Occurs at least ten (10) hours per week and consists of treatment team meetings, detailed work (as determined by the ITP), facilitated groups and individual sessions.

D. Unstructured Activities

Occurs at least ten hours per week and consists of reading, phone calls, showers, exercise, etc.

E. Out of Cell Time

Time the inmates spend in groups as well as recreational activities.

F. Positive Reinforcement Protocol

Protocol set in place to establish a set of rewards and consequences to promote pro-social behaviors.

G. Incentives

Items and/or privileges that encourage program participation.

H. Rewards

Positive reinforcement for specific demonstration of pro-social behavior.

I. Consequences

Removal of tangible items or privileges as a result of inappropriate behavior.

II. Initial Housing Assignment

A. All inmates transferred to maximum security will be reviewed for appropriate housing. Housing for each inmate will be identified as being in one of four housing types; general population, Step-Down Program, medical or segregated housing. Housing will be based on objective criteria and should be the least restrictive necessary to ensure the inmate's own safety as well as the safety to staff, other inmates and the public. Any housing restrictions will serve a specific purpose and be limited to the amount of time necessary to achieve that purpose.

B. The facility head will designate a multi-disciplinary review team to determine appropriate housing assignment of all new arrivals. At a minimum the team will consist of:

1. Deputy Warden;
2. Chief of Security;
3. Program Director;
4. Direct Program Delivery Staff;
5. Assigned Unit Manager;

6. Qualified Health Care Professional (QHCP); and
7. Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP).

C. Initial housing assignment will be based on:

1. Immediate medical and/or mental health need;
2. Seriousness of incident that resulted in placement at maximum security;
3. Assaults causing serious physical harm or death;
4. Involvement in serious disturbance or riot;
5. Introduction of contraband which poses a serious threat to facility security;
6. Escape from a secure facility;
7. Gang affiliation and activity engaging in Security Threat Group conduct;
8. Immediate special needs that require separation from other inmates for the inmate's safety or the safety of others; and
9. Circumstances that warrant administrative action to be taken by senior staff members for maximum placement.

D. Referrals and/or decisions concerning an inmate's medical and/or mental health status will be approved by the appropriate qualified medical (QHCP) or qualified mental health professional (QMHP) staff member within their scope of authority.

1. Referrals to the Mental Health Unit (MHU) or Intermediate Care Housing Unit (ICHU) will be processed in accordance with [OP-140127](#) entitled "Mental Health Units, Intermediate Care Housing Units, and Habilitation Programs."
2. A complete mental health assessment will be conducted within 72 hours of the inmate's arrival.

E. Inmates identified as requiring specialty housing will be processed in accordance with [OP- 040204](#) entitled "Segregation Measures."

III. Program Assessments and Phase Assignment

A. Program Services

1. Program services will establish guidelines and appropriate assessment instruments to be utilized for phase assignment and intensity of services. A structured interview in conjunction with assessment results will be used to identify potential participants for immediate placement into Phase I or Phase II.

B. Initial Program Assessments and Interdisciplinary Treatment Plan (ITP)

1. The “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” form ([Attachment A](#), attached) will be completed by case management within 10 working days of arrival for inmates that are transferred to maximum security due to behavioral/management issues. Evaluation results will provide a baseline for determining appropriateness for programming.
 - a. Evaluation results from the “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” ([Attachment A](#)) will be provided to the Phase Program Director for inmates who are identified as appropriate for Phase programming. Inmates will be assigned to Phase I or Phase II by the Review Team in accordance with [Attachment B](#), attached entitled “Step-Down Program Phase Matrix.”
 - i. Inmates with a score below the normed value on the motivational scale and a score of 8 or higher on the “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” form ([Attachment A](#)) will be placed into Phase I.
 - ii. Inmates with a score above the normed value of the Texas Christian University (TCU) Motivational Scale (TCU-MOT) measuring motivation and 7 or lower on the “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” ([Attachment A](#)) will be placed into Phase II.
 - b. In the event it is determined an inmate is not appropriate for immediate placement into the program, another evaluation will be completed during a scheduled review in accordance with [OP- 040204](#) entitled “Segregation Measures.”
2. An ITP will be completed upon an inmate’s entry into the program. The ITP will identify the intensity of services provided and program components to be completed.

C. Program Progress, Phase Advancement, Phase Demotion and Program Removal

1. Additional assessments will be administered throughout the course of Phase programming. At a minimum, assessment instruments will identify the inmate's level of social functioning, motivation to change, and criminal thinking.
2. Results from the most recent assessments will be compared to the previous assessment results. Improved results, in addition to, accomplishment of goals and objectives of the ITP will be used to determine phase advancement and program completion.
3. Documented progress notes detailing individualized achievement toward specific behavioral goals and objectives, in conjunction with mid and post assessment results will be utilized to evaluate program progress and phase advancement.
4. Phase demotions and program removals will be documented on the "Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation" form (Attachment A) and the "Intra-Facility Assignment Form" ([DOC 060203B](#)) within 3 working days and must be approved by the facility head.

D. Program Completions

1. Program completion will be measured by the inmates' achievement of the goals and objectives stated on their ITP and completion of all assigned program components as well as improved results on post program assessments. Phase advancement and program completion will be documented on the "Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation" form (Attachment A) within three working days.

IV. Staff Duties and Responsibilities

Staff assigned to Step-Down Programs will receive training and specialized instruction regarding effective communication and interventions to motivate change for a criminal justice population. Facility heads are responsible to ensure the staff assigned to Step-Down Program units support strategies that reinforce and encourage positive change.

A. Case Manager Duties and Responsibilities

1. Upon assignment of an inmate to the case manager's caseload, the case manager is responsible to:
 - a. Review the Custody Assessment to ensure points are accurate;
 - b. Review the Case Plan for programming status;

- c. Complete a motivational assessment;
 - d. Complete the “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” form ([Attachment A](#)); and
 - e. Forward the completed “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” ([Attachment A](#)) to the program director prior to the initial face-to-face interview with the review team.
2. After initial assignment, the case manager will be responsible for the following:
- a. Engage in weekly at cell face-to-face interactions with the inmate to encourage adherence to general program guidelines and monitor expected pro-social behaviors.
 - b. Meet with assigned inmates prior to beginning Phase II groups to discuss progress made toward goals and objectives in the ITP as well as any issues or challenges relevant to the inmate.
 - c. Provide input to the review team about participants’ progress and communicate pertinent information during scheduled reviews.
 - d. Document weekly at cell interactions, monthly reviews and all decisions made by the review team in the Offender Management System (OMS) case notes.
 - e. Complete a request for transfer packet one month prior to the inmate’s scheduled program completion.

B. Program Manager

1. The program manager shall be directly involved in the hiring and formal training process of new direct service delivery staff. He/She shall also be involved in providing direct supervision to those staff.
2. The program manager is responsible for the daily operations of the Step-Down Program. Their responsibilities include:
 - a. Ensure assessments are administered according to the Step-Down Program Phase Matrix.
 - b. Ensure an ITP is initiated, maintained, updated and monitored for each participant.
 - c. Ensure appropriate progress notes are routinely documented

and relevant to the goals and objectives established in the ITP.

- d. Participate in direct service delivery to inmates.
- e. Conduct treatment team meetings two times per month.
- f. Maintain a current roster of participants recommended for the Phase program and Phase Advancement by the Review Committee during their regularly scheduled meetings.
- g. Coordinate scheduling of monthly Phase Advancement reviews with participants and the Review Committee.
- h. Provide input to the facility head regarding phase demotions and program removals.

C. Direct Program Delivery Staff

- 1. Direct program delivery staff will report to the program manager. Their responsibilities include:
 - a. Administer initial motivation assessment to inmates referred by case management resulting from the completed "Housing Assessment and Step-Down Program Evaluation" form (Attachment A).
 - b. Recommend initial Phase I or Phase II program placement to the Review Team in accordance with the "Step-Down Program Phase Matrix" (Attachment B).
 - c. Administer pre/mid/post program assessments according to the Phase Matrix.
 - d. Deliver program components and provide individual counseling when needed to program participants.
 - e. Electronically track and monitor assessment results.
 - f. Update and modify ITP as needed.
 - g. Document interactions with the inmate in the Offender Management System (OMS) case notes.

D. Review Team

- 1. A minimum of five (5) review team members designated in Section II. item B. of this procedure will conduct an interview with new

arrivals to determine program participants and initial phase assignments. Identification of program participants and initial phase assignment will occur within ten working days of reception at a maximum security unit.

2. The review team will consider assessment results to identify program participants. Initial phase assignments will be made in accordance with the “Step-Down Program Phase Matrix” ([Attachment B](#)). Factors to be considered include:
 - a. Mental health level;
 - b. Physical limitations;
 - c. Programmatic needs;
 - d. Safety and security of the staff and other inmates;
 - e. Results of motivational assessment;
 - f. Results of the “Housing Assignment and Step-Down Program Evaluation” form ([Attachment A](#)).
3. The review team will provide treatment recommendations for program participants from placement into the program to completion. Review team responsibilities include:
 - a. Attending treatment team meetings every other week to discuss intakes, case reviews, problems, programming, participant progress/lack of progress, and new interventions in consideration for piloting.
 - b. Designing, implementing and maintaining an effective positive reinforcement protocol consisting of a range of tangible social rewards as well as appropriate punishers to extinguish anti-social behaviors and to promote pro-social behaviors.
 - c. Determine monthly phase advancement and/or changes to interventions and services for potential enhanced benefit.
 - d. Determine program completion for each participant. Completion is defined by progress in acquiring pro-social behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs while in the program, and not engaging in behavior that seriously jeopardizes the safety of staff and other program participants.

E. Facility Head

The facility head will ensure a process is in place to re-evaluate inmates that were not approved to participate in programming upon arrival at maximum security. Inmates shall be re-evaluated for program placement if referred by the assigned unit manager and case manager.

1. If after the second evaluation it is determined the inmate is still not appropriate for programming, the facility head will determine further action.

V. Restrictions and Conditions of Confinement

While assigned to a maximum security unit, inmates will be afforded the rights of those described in P-030100 entitled "Provisions of Services/Inmate rights and Responsibilities" and OP-060103 entitled "Male Custody Assessment Procedures." During assignment at maximum security, privileges will be limited but may be earned as the inmate advances through each phase.

- A. Restrictions, expectations, and incentives of each phase in the program are identified in the "Step-Down Program Phase Matrix" ([Attachment B](#)).
- B. When an inmate is deprived of any authorized item or activity, documentation will be made on an OMS case note and an incident report forwarded to the chief of security and the review team. (4-4265)

VI. Program Components and Phase Descriptions

Each phase in the Step-Down Program provides an opportunity for the inmate to earn privileges through positive program participation and consistent demonstration of pro-social behaviors. Program components will be specific to the inmate's needs to facilitate return to general population.

Privileges and rewards will be based on a four (4) phase system. The "Positive Reinforcement Protocol" ([Attachment C](#), attached) establishes the incentive protocol for each phase. Advancement through the four phases requires completion of all assigned components identified in the "Step-Down Program Phase Matrix" ([Attachment B](#)).

The "Step-Down Program Phase Matrix" ([Attachment B](#)) provides an expected length of duration for each phase of programming for an average participant. Time frames indicated are meant to be a reference guide for routine program delivery.

A. Phase I

Phase I provides in cell Literacy, Pre-High School Equivalency/Adult Basic Education (PHS/ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) programs for inmates identified with an assessed need for education. Inmates requiring assistance with reading and/or writing will receive individual instruction from education staff on a continuous basis. Lesson assignments will be

delivered/retrieved a minimum of twice per week, if the inmate cannot attend normal classes; and interactive journaling and exercises designed to guide inmates through a self-directed process of behavior change.

B. Phase II

Phase II continues in cell educational programming and introduces the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) concept, "cognitions (i.e. thoughts) and emotions are linked to behaviors." Interactive journaling and advanced exercises help participants identify risky thoughts and feelings associated with their own behaviors. Inmates begin the process of transitioning to programs delivered in a group setting.

C. Phase III

Phase III consists of classroom educational programming, Thinking for a Change (T4C) and Aggression Replacement Training (ART) groups. T4C is a cognitive behavioral change program designed to change an inmate's behavior by restructuring their thinking. Heavy emphasis is placed on cognitive restructuring, social skills and problem solving skills development. ART is a behavioral, cognitive and emotional intervention for aggression that utilizes skill streaming, anger control training, and moral reasoning.

D. Phase IV

Phase IV continues classroom educational programming and completion of T4C and ART groups. Inmates that continue to display positive behaviors during Phase IV are prepared for institutional job assignments. Transition to lower security could then be considered for inmates that consistently demonstrate pro-social behaviors.

VII. Program Progress Reviews

Changing behavior requires effective communication among staff and between staff and inmates. For inmates, communication is established through on-going face-to-face interviews and program progress reviews. Phase promotions and /or demotions and other significant matters pertaining to the inmate's behavior should be addressed during progress reviews. Focus should be given to recognizing and rewarding good behavior and changing problematic behavior.

Mandatory progress reviews will be conducted as follows:

A. Weekly Review

An at-cell review by the assigned case manager for compliance with unit rules, cell sanitation, personal hygiene, and program participation will be conducted weekly.

B. Monthly Review

A minimum of five (5) review team members designated in Section II. item B. of this procedure will conduct out of cell interviews with inmates participating in the program that are recommended for phase promotions or demotions.

C. Mental Health Review (4-4356)

A mental health assessment will be prepared by the QMHP every 30 days, or more frequently if recommended by the mental health authority in accordance with [OP-140201](#) entitled "Mental Health Duties and Responsibilities."

D. Facility Head Review

It is imperative that the facility head encourage effective communication between staff and staff and inmates. To promote this philosophy the facility head will be responsible to attend a minimum of two treatment team meetings per quarter.

The facility head will also be responsible for:

1. Reviewing all written documentation regarding phase demotions and program removals. Ensure that documentation clearly outlines the behaviors that warrant the action being recommended.
2. Approving or deny all phase demotions.
3. Approving or deny all program removals.
4. Ensuring an on-going evaluation protocol is established and maintained for inmates not immediately placed into programming.
5. Ensuring a request for transfer is completed one month prior to the inmate's scheduled program completion.

E. Regional Director Review

Placement in Step-Down Programs longer than twelve (12) months require approval by the appropriate regional director. The appropriate regional director will meet with the inmate and review all pertinent documentation regarding the inmate's programming and behaviors.

1. The following information will be used to determine whether the inmate should remain or be removed from the program:
 - a. Circumstances for which the inmate was placed at maximum security.

- b. All documented behaviors since the inmate was admitted to the program.
 2. Inmates approved to continue programming will be scheduled for a follow up review in 30 days after continuance approval.
 - a. The regional director will provide an alternative course of action for inmates denied program continuance.

VIII. Reporting Requirements

- A. The facility head or designee will ensure the following information is reported in the frequency and manner as prescribed in the "Program Attendance Record" ([OP-090101](#), [Attachment A](#)).
 1. Each treatment/educational program, as well as ancillary classes or support groups, will report all inmate participation monthly (per [OP-090101](#), [Attachment A](#)).
 2. Additional data that may be requested will be provided in the format specified by the director of Program Services.

IX. References

P-030100 entitled "Provisions of Services/Inmate Rights and Responsibilities"

OP-030102 entitled "Inmate Housing"

OP-030118 entitled "Visitation"

OP-030119 entitled "Inmate Telephone Privileges"

OP-030501 entitled "Personal Hygiene and Appearance"

OP-040204 entitled "Segregation Measures"

OP-060103 entitled "Male Custody Assessment Procedures"

OP-090101 entitled "Standards for Inmate Programs"

OP-140127 entitled "Mental Health Units, Intermediate Care Housing Units, and Habilitation Programs"

OP-140201 entitled "Mental Health Services Duties and Responsibilities"

X. Action

The regional directors are responsible for compliance with this procedure.

The director of Population, Programs and Strategic Planning is responsible for the annual review and revision.

Any exceptions to this procedure will require written approval of the agency director.

This procedure is effective as indicated.

Replaced: Operations Memorandum No. OP-090601 entitled "Management of Step-Down Programs" dated September 18, 2017

Distribution: Policy and Operations Manual
Agency Website

<u>Attachments</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Location</u>
Attachment A	"Program Attendance Record"	OP-090101
Attachment A	"Housing Assessment and Step-Down Program Evaluation"	Attached
Attachment B	"Step-Down Program Phase Matrix"	Attached
Attachment C	"Positive Reinforcement Protocol"	Attached
Attachment D	"Regional Director Review"	Attached
<u>Referenced Forms</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Location</u>
DOC 140201B	"Mental Health Assessment for Restrictive Housing"	OP-140201