

**Department of Correction
Objective Point Base Classification Report to the
Joint Committee on Public Safety and
House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means
Pursuant To DOC Budget Line Item FY22 8900-0001**

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) line item 8900-0001 of the Fiscal Year 2022 General Appropriations Act, this report overviews the Objective Point Base ("OPB") Classification system for all inmates incarcerated in state prison facilities.

The OPB is the standardized custody level assignment of an inmate based on objectively defined criteria. The criteria are weighed, scored and organized into a valid and reliable classification instrument accompanied by an operational manual for applying the instrument to inmates in a systematic manner. OPB classification systems rely on factors that have been proven to predict prison adjustment and address issues of overclassification (the housing of inmates at a security level that is higher than what is required) and underclassification (the housing of inmates at a security level that is lower than what is required).

The development of the DOC's OPB Classification system began in 2002 with our request for technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections. DOC introduced the system in 2006, and it became fully operational at all facilities in 2008. According to the US Department of Justice, NIC Series, *A Guide for Correctional Agencies, Objective Prison Classification*, revalidation of a prison classification system must/should occur every three (3) to five (5) years. Accordingly, in 2013, DOC began a re-evaluation of the OPB classification tool to ensure its validity. Based on that review, DOC implemented several changes to the OPB form in 2014. Those changes included lowering the threshold score for males and females, as well as adjusting several variables to higher thresholds, all of which resulted in DOC granting more inmates a classification of minimum custody. In short, DOC has modified the 2006 tool such that it has increased the number of inmates eligible for placement in lower security without compromising the safety and security of staff, inmates and the public.

In keeping with the recommended time frames, MA DOC, initiated a second revalidation in 2018. MA DOC completed the review in May 2019 and approved all proposed changes in September 2019. DOC approved changes on November 18, 2019, which included adjusting several variables/restrictions and adding a fourth age category for male offenders, all of which resulted in more inmates becoming eligible for placement in a lower security.

**Custody Level Breakdown for MA DOC
Inmates as of December 1, 2021**

Maximum Security	12%
Medium Security	76%
Minimum Security or Below	12%

As of December 1, 2021, the waitlists are as follow: 1 inmate waiting for a medium security bed; 8 inmates waiting for a minimum security bed; there are no wait lists for maximum or pre-release security. Nine inmates were waiting to transfer as of December 1, 2021.

A necessary feature of an OPB Classification System is the use of overrides which allows staff to depart from the scored custody level when appropriate. A restriction is when a Department of

Correction (“DOC”) policy prevents an inmate from placement in lower custody, regardless of their total score (e.g., inmates whose immigration status is pending or those with an immigration detainer or deportation order are not to be considered for minimum or below). Classification staff has no authority to disregard these restrictions. An override is applied when a scored custody level is changed based on the professional judgment of trained classification staff. The use of overrides should be between 5% and 15% of the classified population.

Override Rates for DOC inmates as of December 1, 2021 are:

Higher Security	7%
Lower Security	4%
Total	11%

¹ Source: *Classification of High Risk and Special Management Prisoners: A National Assessment of Current Practices* (Austin and McGinnis, 2004).