

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

103 DOC 473
INMATE SELF IMPROVEMENT GROUPS

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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION	DIVISION: Program Services
TITLE: Inmate Self Improvement Groups	NUMBER: 103 DOC 473

PURPOSE: The purpose of 103 DOC 473.00 is to establish Department of Correction ("department") guidelines governing the establishment and administration of inmate Self Improvement groups at all Department of Correction institutions.

REFERENCES: M.G.L., c 124, § 1 (c),(e) and (q)

APPLICABILITY: Staff/Inmates

PUBLIC ACCESS: Yes

LOCATION: Department Central Policy File
Each Institution's Policy File

RESPONSIBLE STAFF FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF POLICY:
Deputy Commissioner of Clinical Services and
Reentry Division

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/24/2017

CANCELLATION: 103 DOC 473.00 cancels all previous Department policy statements, bulletins, directives, orders, notices, rules, and regulations regarding Inmate Self Improvement Groups which are inconsistent with this policy.

SEVERABILITY CLAUSE: If any part of 103 DOC 473 is for any reason held to be in excess of the authority of the Commissioner such decisions shall not affect any other part of this policy.

473.01 Establishment of an Inmate Self Improvement Group

Inmate Self Improvement Groups are structured inmate coordinated groups designed to reduce inmate idleness and enhance reentry by providing offenders with a forum to develop interpersonal communication, problem solving and basic life skills. For the purpose of this policy, religious services and activities, self help groups and volunteer facilitated programs are not considered Self Improvement Groups.

1. Inmates may request to establish a Self Improvement Group by submitting a proposal (attachment A) to the Superintendent.
2. The proposal shall detail the purpose of the group, goals, objectives, organizational structure, space and time requirements, associated costs, rules and benefits to the inmate population.
3. The Superintendent may either recommend approving, denying or modifying the proposal. Denied proposals shall be returned to the inmates within thirty (30) business days of receipt, detailing the rationale for denial.
4. Approved proposals shall be submitted to the Director of Program Services who shall make a recommendation to the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry within ten (10) business days of receipt.
5. The Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry shall make the final decision. Written notification of the decision shall be forwarded to the respective Superintendent within ten (10) business days of receipt.
6. The Director of Program Services or designee shall update the Program Description Booklet.
7. Self Improvement Group proposals shall be maintained on file by the Director of Program Services and the Superintendent's designee.
8. Each institution with a Self Improvement Group shall seek to provide space, time and supervision for all such groups on an equal basis.
9. An approved Self Improvement Group may be replicated at other institutions by the Superintendent's designee by notifying the Director of Program Services.

473.02 **Inmate Self Improvement Group Membership**

1. Inmate Self Improvement Group membership shall not discriminate based on an inmate's race, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or political views.
2. Inmates who are found guilty of a category two or higher disciplinary infraction may be prohibited from participating in or joining a Self Improvement Group until they have been disciplinary report free for a period of six months.

473.03 **Supervision of Inmate Self Improvement Groups**

1. The Superintendent shall designate a staff member to oversee Inmate Self Improvement Groups.
2. The Superintendent's designee shall assign a group member to function as the inmate coordinator. The inmate coordinator shall serve as liaison between the group and the Superintendent's designee. The inmate coordinator shall submit agendas, meeting minutes, requests to disperse funds and process dues, Special Activity Event Applications and any other requests.
3. Each Inmate Self Improvement Group shall submit an agenda five (5) business days prior to the meeting for review and approval by the Superintendent's designee.
4. The Inmate Self Improvement Group shall submit meeting minutes to the Superintendent's designee no later than two (2) business days after the meeting.
5. The Superintendent may waive the requirement to submit an agenda and/or minutes if the focus of the Inmate Self Improvement Group is primarily a leisure time activity.
6. Failure to adhere to the agenda or submit meeting minutes within the required time frame may result in the suspension or termination of the Inmate Self Improvement Group.
7. The Superintendent's designee shall maintain and update a monthly roster for each Inmate Self Improvement Group.
8. Inmates may enroll in a Self Improvement Group by submitting a request to the Superintendent's designee.
9. The Superintendent's designee shall add the inmate's name to the next month's roster. The inmate shall be eligible to attend group meetings once the

monthly roster has been published. The inmate may be placed on a waiting list if the size of the designated meeting space can not accommodate the number of group participants.

10. If an inmate misses two (2) consecutive meetings or two (2) meetings in one (1) month, he/she shall be terminated from the group and his/her name removed from the roster. If an inmate is removed from the roster, he/she is no longer eligible to attend group meetings or participate in group Special Activities.
11. An inmate may write to the Superintendent's designee thirty (30) business days after the termination date requesting to be placed back on the group's roster.

473.04 **Volunteers and Guest Speakers**

1. Inmate Self Improvement Groups are encouraged to identify potential volunteers or guest speakers to attend regularly scheduled meetings or Special Activity events.
2. Inmate Self Improvement Groups shall not directly contact potential volunteers or guest speakers. Failure to comply may result in the suspension or termination of the Inmate Self Improvement Group.
3. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to prevent an inmate from filing individual grievances about the conditions of their confinement or from corresponding with public officials, civilians, or others about those conditions.
4. The Inmate Self Improvement Group inmate coordinator shall forward the name of the potential volunteer or guest speaker to the Superintendent's designee with a brief summary of the topic to be presented.
5. The Superintendent's designee shall ensure that the topic is appropriate and consistent with the goals and objectives of the group and contact the potential volunteer or guest speaker to extend an invitation to attend a regularly scheduled meeting.
6. All volunteers and guest speakers shall be processed pursuant to the requirements of 103 CMR 485.00 Volunteers and Volunteer Programs.

473.05 **Special Activity Events**

1. Inmate Self Improvement Groups may submit Special Activity Event Applications (Attachment B). Each Special Activity Event shall be consistent with the Inmate Self Improvement Group's stated purpose, goals

and objectives. Refreshments if requested shall be limited to coffee and tea.

2. Participants shall be limited to active group members and approved volunteers pursuant 103 CMR 485.00 Volunteers and Volunteer Programs.
3. The Superintendent may recommend to approve, deny or modify the Special Activity Event Application. Denied applications shall be returned to the inmate coordinator within ten (10) business days of receipt detailing the rationale for denial.
4. Approved applications shall be submitted to the Director of Program Services who shall make a recommendation to the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry within ten (10) business days of receipt.
5. The Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry shall make the final decision. Written notification of the decision shall be forwarded to the respective Superintendent within ten (10) business days of receipt.
6. The Director of Program Services and the Superintendent's designee shall maintain Special Activity Event Applications on file.
7. Groups that gain administrative approval for a special activity may be granted additional meeting time for the planning of the event. An administration's inability to meet the demands for these resources remains a legitimate reason for denial of these requests.

473.06 Inmate Self Improvement Group Assessment Process

1. The Superintendent's designee shall assess each Self Improvement Group within six (6) months of its establishment and each year thereafter to determine if it is functioning in accordance with its stated purpose, goals and objectives.
2. The assessment shall include a review of agendas, meeting minutes, attendance, Special Activity Event Applications, proposals, requests to disperse funds, correspondence, direct observation of group meetings and feedback from assigned staff and volunteer if applicable.
3. Written notification shall be forwarded to the inmate coordinator identifying the deficiencies, if it is determined that the group is not adhering to its stated purpose, goals and objectives.

4. The inmate coordinator shall submit a plan of action to the Superintendent's designee addressing the identified deficiencies.
5. If after thirty (30) business days, it has been determined by the Superintendent that the deficiencies have not been corrected, the group may be suspended or discontinued at the discretion of the Superintendent.
6. Once the Superintendent has determined that a suspension or termination is warranted, the Superintendent's designee shall notify the inmate coordinator and Director of Program Services in writing of the decision.
7. If a group has been suspended or terminated, the inmate coordinator may appeal the suspension or termination to the Director of Program Services within ten (10) business days of receipt of written notification.

473.07 **Inmate Self Improvement Group Accounts**

1. The Superintendent shall request through the Treasurer's Office the establishment of a Z Account for all approved groups pursuant to 103 DOC 405.00 Inmate Funds.
2. The Treasurer shall submit such requests to the Internal Audit Office for final approval.
3. Group Z Accounts shall be maintained in accordance with 103 DOC 346.00 Internal Controls Procedures.

473.08 **Inactive Self Improvement Groups**

1. An Inmate Self Improvement Group shall be deemed inactive when it does not have any members or activities for three (3) consecutive months.
2. The Superintendent's designee shall notify the Superintendent and the Director of Program Services of such status.
3. The Director of Program Services or designee shall update the Program Description Booklet accordingly.
4. The Superintendent shall notify the Institutional Treasurer in writing and request any balances in the Self Improvement Group account be transferred to the Inmate Benefit Account.

473.09 **Inmate Self Improvement Group Dues**

1. Inmate Self Improvement Groups may solicit a

voluntary monthly dues payment from participants. Dues shall be limited to two (2) dollars per month per member.

2. Inmates paying dues may submit an institutional charge slip to the Superintendent's designee for final approval.
3. No inmate who is deemed indigent shall be prevented from participation due to inability to submit voluntary dues.

473.10 **Inmate Self Improvement Group Purchases**

1. The purchase of coffee, tea or office supplies with Group Z-Account funds shall be in accordance with Department of Correction Purchasing Procedures.
2. All requests to utilize Group Z Account funds shall be approved by the Superintendent's designee.
3. All requests shall originate from the inmate coordinator. Justification for the request shall be furnished along with how the requested items will be utilized. There shall be a compelling need for the requested items and directly related to the goals/mission of the group.
4. The majority of requests shall be funded by the groups approved Z Account.
5. Inmate Self Improvement Groups may request to utilize Inmate Benefit Funds for office supplies and other program related material i.e. DVD's, books. Any request to utilize Inmate Benefit Funds shall be reviewed/approved by the Superintendent pursuant to 103 DOC 476.00 Canteen and Vending Machine Operations and Expenditures.
6. All program related materials and supplies shall be secured in an area designated by the Superintendent's designee.
7. The Superintendent's designee shall ensure supplies or services are delivered to the group and that they are used for their intended purpose. Any abuses of supplies or services shall be immediately reported to the Superintendent and may result in the suspension or termination of the Inmate Self Improvement Group.

473.11 **Inmate Self Improvement Group Donations**

1. Inmate Self Improvement Groups may not solicit the community for donations.
2. Any information regarding a potential donation shall be referred to the Superintendent's designee.

3. The information shall include a contact person, items to be considered for donation and justification for donation.
4. All potential donations are subject to the Superintendent's approval. Donations may not be accepted if it is determined that the institution cannot accommodate the donation or it is not consistent with the needs of the group.
5. The Superintendent's designee shall contact the potential donor and coordinate the delivery of items. In most instances, donations shall be limited to related books, DVD's, office supplies and other program related material.
6. All donated items shall become the property of the Department and subject to the use of other groups and/or the inmate general population.

473.12 **Emergencies**

Whenever, in the opinion of the Commissioner or the Superintendent of a state correctional institution, an emergency exists which requires suspension of all or part of this policy, the Superintendent may order such suspension. However, any such suspension lasting beyond forty-eight (48) hours shall be authorized by the Commissioner.

SELF IMPROVEMENT GROUP APPLICATION FORM

Date: _____

Institution: _____

Program Title: _____

Space and Meeting Time Requirements: _____

Approval: Yes No

Superintendent

Date

Approval: Yes No

Director of Program Services

Date

Approval: Yes No

Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry

Date

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

Program Description: Detailed explanation of the purpose of the group.

Program Goals and Objectives: Identify the intended program goals and objectives.

Describe the benefits to the inmate population:

Rehabilitative Benefits: (Describe the immediate and future rehabilitative benefits for the offender.)

Immediate rehabilitative benefits:

Future rehabilitative benefits:

**SELF IMPROVEMENT GROUP
SPECIAL ACTIVITY APPLICATION**

Date:_____

Institution:_____

Special Activity Title: _____

Special Activity Start

Date:_____

Supervising Staff: Name & Title: _____

Volunteer Facilitator(s): Name: _____

Materials/Supplies: _____

Associated Costs: _____

Space Requirements: _____

Agenda: Yes No

Approval: Yes No

Superintendent

Date

Approval: Yes No

Director of Program Services

Date

Approval: Yes No

Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Reentry

Date

SPECIAL ACTIVITY NARRATIVE

Special Activity Description: (Outline of the agenda to include a description of how the special activity supports the program's stated goals and objectives.)

Describe the structure of the special activity (for example: guest speaker, group discussion, community reparation activity, family reunification activity).

Special Activity Goals/Outcomes: (Identify the intended goals/outcomes.)

Rehabilitative Benefits: (Describe the immediate and future rehabilitative benefits for the offender.)

Immediate rehabilitative benefits:

Future rehabilitative benefits: