



# Issue Brief

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Inmate Classification System

### Overview

In 2008, the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) adopted an automated Classification System and an automated Work Housing Assignment Level Evaluation (WHALE). These systems assist the Department to assess risk and help determine work crew eligibility and housing placement.

These automated systems have decreased staff workload and increased statewide consistency and reliability of placement. This promotes effective resource management by placing adults in custody in the least restrictive, and subsequently less costly, environment necessary for safe management.

### Classification System Explained

Classification scores are determined using research-based data to determine an adult in custody's Policy Elements and risk of engaging in violent behavior in an institutional setting. Policy Elements include: Detainers, Escape History, Institutional Behavior and Sentence Length. Risk for engaging in violent behavior is determined using a combination of the algorithmically calculated and research-based Violence Predictor Score (VPS) along with a thorough assessment of multiple factors in an inmate's history. Inmates with higher scores are managed in more secure institutions.

Predictability of the VPS formula declines after the first year of incarceration. Hence, use of the VPS is discontinued after 12 months and classification levels are determined solely by use of the Policy Elements listed above along with appropriate professional discretion.

### Work Housing Assignment Levels Evaluation System

Once an adult in custody is classified at custody level 1 or 2, he or she is eligible for minimum facility placement and a WHALE evaluation is completed. The evaluation provides DOC with an accurate profile of inmates eligible for assignment to community work crews or placement in an unfenced minimum facility. Inmates who fail to meet eligibility criteria for community work crews or unfenced housing are assigned to inside work assignments at minimum facilities. ■

**The mission of the  
Oregon Department of Corrections  
is to promote public safety by holding  
offenders accountable for their actions and  
reducing the risk of future criminal behavior.**



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