



# **GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING AN OBJECTIVE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM IN JAILS**

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## I. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 The Importance of Implementation

The implementation of new technologies in both public and private organizations has assumed increasing importance in the last several years. In the Criminal Justice System, for example, numerous advances in information technology, data management, and many new programs and procedures are continually being incorporated into jails, prisons, probation departments, courts, etc. These new procedures often aim to achieve greater efficiency, to comply with legal requirements, or to solve critical organizational problems (e.g. jail overcrowding). Programs or procedures developed in one jurisdiction are often transferred and implemented in other jurisdictions.

This diffusion of techniques and programs falls under the heading of "technology transfer". In the area of Jail Inmate Classification, two large scale technology transfer experiments are currently underway in which state-of-the-art classification procedures are being implemented in local jails. These efforts take advantage of new methods to save development costs, and provide technology to local jails which often have limited research and development resources. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC), a federal agency providing technical assistance to jails has mounted an ambitious effort to develop new classification techniques and help jails implement these procedures (NCCD 1990; NIC 1990). In a similar effort in Michigan, a local criminal justice agency in Traverse City has developed an objective inmate classification and data management system which has been implemented in several jails and is currently being made available to all counties in the state through Michigan's Community Corrections Act initiative.

The key to success in such efforts is carefully planned implementation coupled with appropriate technology. The increasing complexity of public organizations and the high costs of failure have created a need for improved understanding of implementing organizational change. The goal of this paper is to clarify and develop approaches to implementation of new information technologies (e.g. objective classification) in jails.

### 1.2 A History of Implementation Failure in Jails

The history of jail and prison classification is littered with failures in the implementation of new classification techniques (Bohnstedt and Gieser 1978; ACA 1984). Jails are not atypical in this difficulty and failure of implementing major procedural changes. Studies of organizational change in many public agencies have found widespread failure in introducing changes (Schoech 1982; Walton 1989).

Implementation failure of new classification systems in jails appears to have

several common patterns.

a) In one pattern, administrative agreement to adopt new procedures is followed by months of chaos, frustration, work overload, and resentment before the classification unit reaches or surpasses prior levels of performance. There may be increased error rates, decreased productivity, sabotage, and resistance. The new methods may be abandoned and staff revert to former procedures. This kind of failure appears to stem from inadequate input, and inadequate compliance and support from line level staff.

b) In other cases the new classification system is half-heartedly supported and receives inadequate commitment by management. Inadequate attention is paid to implementation planning and inadequate staff resources are allocated to the project. This results in minimal achievement of expected benefits. Such failures are accompanied by interpersonal conflict, loss of morale, and blaming.

Several other patterns of failure have been described in the literature. The reasons for failure are numerous and complex and are explored in detail later in this paper. One general problem is that jail administrators and managers often give inadequate attention to implementation. Mankin et al (1988) found that once the decision has been made to adopt a particular procedure, managers in many organizations pay little attention to the process. In such instances, implementation seldom receives appropriate budgets, staffing, or political support. Costs are often grossly underestimated. For example, aside from the obvious need for staff training, inadequate budgeting may omit many critical non-hardware and software costs (coordination costs, meetings, monitoring and planning procedures and so on). Other management failures include:

- Failure to carefully plan the implementation effort,
- Failure to develop support and "buy-in" from users,
- Failure to select appropriate technology
- Failure to create and disseminate a vision of the goals
- Failure to provide needed training to users
- etc.

This paper explores various factors that jointly contribute to the failure or success of attempts to introduce technical innovations in Jails. This paper offers a framework for implementation of organizational and procedural changes in jails - with a specific focus on new classification systems.

### **1.3 Implementation of New Classification Systems is Complex and Difficult**

Jail managers should not be held solely responsible for implementation failure. Johnson and Fredian (1986) noted that managing complex organizational change is one of the most difficult and frustrating tasks for managers in any organization. In jails, several factors make the process of organizational and

procedural change particularly complex and difficult.

a. No standard methods for implementation have existed in the jail context. There are few guidelines for jail managers to follow when implementing changes to information processing or classification procedures. A collection of "guidelines" for implementing objective classifications has recently been offered (NCCD, 1990). However, these general guidelines lack a strategic, sequential, structure that organizes implementation tasks into a coherent model.

b. There are very few studies of the implementation of technological innovations in jails (e.g. advanced classification methods). Lessons learned in one jurisdiction or jail may be inappropriate in another. There have been few systematic studies on the transfer of knowledge across correctional institutions. However, for the past 7 years the classification project in Michigan has developed and implemented the same classification system in each of over 18 small, medium and large jails with several more jails implementing the system in the near future.

c. Inmate classification systems are not usually designed to facilitate transfer between jails. Some systems are customized to local norms, local jail inmate populations, and local architectures (Bohnstedt and Geiser 1978; Brennan 1987). Such customization produces idiosyncrasies which may prevent easy transfer and acceptance in other jurisdictions.

d. Accurate and readable documentation (useful from a training standpoint) is rare; thus, the transfer of skill is impaired.

e. Transfer of new classification procedures may create resistance if local jail staff are insufficiently involved in their development. A complex process of obtaining staff support (at both line and management levels) is mandatory for the success of implementation.

f. The change must occur with minimal disruption of current jail operations. New and old procedures often run in parallel for a short time, creating extreme work overload.

g. Implementing a new inmate classification system is especially difficult since it impacts so many operations both inside and outside the jail. Walton (1989) noted the difficulty in implementing any procedure which impacts several operations or units, which significantly alters the way many people work, and whose impact extends to outside agencies. Changes in inmate classification effect the jail and outside agencies (e.g. Courts, Probation, Alternatives to Incarceration and Treatment Programs). Many stakeholders will be strongly impacted by changes to the classification procedures.

h. Leadership and political support from top administrators is mandatory for

successful implementation, yet many Jail Administrators casually delegate implementation to middle managers and then provide only limited and intermittent support. The managers selected often do not have any real authority in the jail. Strong political support is needed at all phases of implementation and must be consistently provided by top management.

#### **1.4 General Phases and Tasks of Implementation**

Several phases of implementation of new classifications in jails can be delineated. These are:

- a) The Pre-Implementation Phase
  - An initial recognition of a performance deficit.
  - A decision to take action.
  - Development of a supportive coalition to promote the change.
  - Consideration of preliminary designs and alignment issues.
- b) The Design Phase
  - Selection, development and testing of new procedures.
- c) The Implementation Phase
  - Introduction and integration into daily operations.
- d) The Post-Implementation Phase
  - Assessment, evaluation and modification.

Each phase has several sub-tasks and each creates the pre-conditions for success at the next phase. A sense of these phases is captured in the phrase "...build it, try it, change it". The successive phases overlap and are inter-related. Several examples of implementation failure in jails can be attributed to the omission of some major step (NCCD 1990, Shoeh 1982, Ackerman 1986). If an earlier phase is poorly done, or a major step neglected, the success of the next phase will be threatened.

Three recurrent tasks provide an organizing principle for the successive sub-tasks. These are:

- 1) **Alignment of the new procedures with goals and organizational structure of the jail.**

Alignment implies that the new classification methods and policies are consistent with the jail's structure, strategies, policies and goals. This is difficult to achieve and involves several decisions regarding the selection of classification methods, selection of risk factors, decisions regarding computerization, and so on.

## 2) **Securing Commitment and Support**

The political tasks of gaining staff commitment, support and ownership is essential for implementation at all phases. Communication, trust, and an appreciation of the benefits of the new classification are all important. Support and involvement at both management and line levels are critical. If these are overlooked, problems of resistance, sabotage and abandonment of the new system may emerge.

## 3) **Building Competence and Skills**

When new objective classification procedures are introduced into, jails the question of skill development emerges. Needed skills may be missing at both line management levels. Thus, even when a valid and sophisticated classification is present, it may be ignored or used erroneously or carelessly. Training must ensure that the needed skills are present and that the system is used appropriately. Additional questions involve whether staff (at line and management levels) have opportunities for continual learning and professional growth, or whether they experience "job impoverishment". A related question is whether jail staff have any opportunity to influence the continuing evolution of the classification system through periodic assessment and feedback.

### 1.5 **Managing Participation: Who Should Be Involved?**

A decision at each implementation phase is "who should be involved and in what capacity?". Implementation managers must address this question at all phases. Their success in securing involvement of critical staff strongly influences the success in achieving good design, political support, staff acceptance, and the ease with which the new system is integrated into day-to-day jail operations. Two general themes in participation can be delineated:

a) Breadth of participation: Decisions must be made regarding the breadth of involvement of various users, stakeholders, managers, union representatives, technical specialists, consultants, and so on. Broad involvement is usually preferred and is critical among all those from whom technical expertise, ownership and user support are needed. However, jail norms and personnel expectations will deeply influence who participates and in what manner. When jail staff have high skills and hold strong attitudes favoring participation, broader involvement is likely. If the new classification procedures are expected to have a wide scope of influence, broad participation is desirable. Breadth of participation is also influenced by the need for expertise. The most appropriately trained and strategically positioned jail staff should participate if possible. This includes both line and management staff, technical and computer

specialists, technical consultants, trainers, etc.

b) Depth/level of participation: This defines the depth of influence and decision-making power of various parties. Not all parties are equally well trained or have sufficient perspective to make certain decisions. Some limitations on input may be appropriate on issues such as: design choices, choices of training content, timing and scope of installation, diffusion plans, etc.

Breadth and depth of involvement vary widely in different types of jails, different implementation situations, and at different phases of a project.

### **Roles and Some Common Imbalances in Participation**

A recent NSF study (Mankin et al 1988) of the success and failure of implementation identified essential contributions of certain participants. The findings help guide selection of who to involve at various stages. Groups with major inputs to a new classification system are:

- a) Top management
- b) Technical staff, consultants and MIS personnel
- c) Classification managers and line officers
- d) Inter-department mid-management representatives  
(e.g. booking, medical, programs, etc.)

This Mankin study suggests that all these groups must be involved in a balanced manner. None should dominate the implementation process. Success appears to require the balanced involvement and input of all groups. The dominance of one group to the exclusion of others may have negative consequences. For example, the failure of the Santa Clara Jail classification implementation as described by Bohnstedt and Geiser (1978) appeared due to insufficient input from classification unit line staff.

The same study identified an "expert dominated" form of imbalance, which fails because of inadequate commitment and input from both line staff and top managers. This occurred in one large urban multi-jail system which attempted to design and implement an objective classification system during the mid-1980's. The new classification system, although technically sophisticated, was never successfully implemented. Implementation was dominated by a technical consultant team, with insufficient input from line staff and jail managers. There was no "buy-in" and only weak political commitment from both managers and staff in the jails was obtained.

Dominance by technical specialists or outside consultants may occur if a vacuum is created by the disinterest of top management or by the frequent exclusion of line staff from design questions. The contributions of technical specialists,

consultants and computer/MIS personnel are positive in that they can ensure state-of-the-art information, advanced classification design, and expert assistance for the technical aspects of classification.

However, an emphasis on advanced systems, combined with exclusion of lower level managers and line staff input may produce a system that is perhaps unusable in practice. User skills, workload implications, and training needs are easily underestimated. This may produce a serious mismatch between the requirements of the new system and the resources of the correctional staff.

Imbalance may result from too much or too little input from top administrators. Top jail administrators seldom dominate the implementation process and are often insufficiently involved. Yet, they are responsible for several critical contributions without which the success of any implementation is endangered. They should provide the following:

- a) Clear goals and policies regarding the benefits of the new classification (i.e. a sense of "vision").
- b) Continued and visible political support.
- c) Financial, staffing and training resources.
- d) Commitment to the implementation of the new system.

An imbalance - described in the Mankin study - occurs if implementation is overly dominated by top administrators. Planning may be too rigid, technical design and procedures may make unrealistic demands on line staff, the "big picture" orientation can be overemphasized while information needs of line staff are ignored. Line staff resistance and sabotage may occur in jail classification when their data needs and work loads are insufficiently addressed.

Although the contributions of line staff during implementation are critical they often have little say in implementation decisions. Their involvement helps in several ways: 1) They have first-hand knowledge of classification job tasks which helps in developing pragmatic and usable classification procedures, 2) Their continued involvement during implementation promotes feelings of ownership and a commitment to making the system work. 3) They are often the first barometer for assessing the appropriateness and adequacy of the new classification.

The following chapters examine each phase of implementation in greater detail

## II. THE PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: CREATING A CONTEXT FOR A NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

### 2.1 Recognition of Deficiencies in the Current Classification System

At the earliest stages - before implementing a new classification system - some important background information is critical. This information is useful for building political support, obtaining resources, and for the technical task of designing a classification system to meet the needs of a jail.

First, who recognized that the current classification was inadequate? A salient political issue is who called attention to "the problem" and who remained complacent (or blind) regarding the deficiencies of the current system. This is critical in jails since if top administrators and those who control budgets and staffing do not "see" any problems in the current classification, they will also see little need to support the project. Thus, an early challenge is to educate these personnel about the problems, the deficiencies, and risks to the jail of the current classification system.

In many jails, classification becomes a problem not because the line staff or management saw anything wrong with current practice, but from external pressure due to the jail's violation of certain state or national standards (e.g. through litigation by inmates, court orders, and consent decrees). Complacency may stem from several sources, and the consultant must be aware of the factors behind the apathy or complacency of those personnel who see "no problems". Complacency may arise for several reasons:

- Insufficient knowledge or training in classification,
- Absence of performance data on the current classification,
- Thoughtlessness, laziness or burnout,
- Being distracted by other pressing events,
- Fear of change, fear of involvement: CYA orientation,
- Powerlessness due to poor technical skills or low position in the bureaucratic hierarchy,
- Etc.

Thus, the main actors - managers and line level - must be understood and several questions answered (e.g. who decided to do something? who didn't care? who remained uninvolved? who doesn't see any problem?). If uninvolved managers or staff are in critical positions an important task is to sensitize them, justify the importance of a new classification, and obtain their "buy-in". Successful implementation demands that critically placed managers and staff recognize the deficiencies and the need for change.

## **2.2 Understanding and Establishing New Goals for Classification**

Discussions in this phase must develop goals for the new classification system. A compilation of current deficiencies as seen by jail personnel (line and management) and external stakeholders (courts, inmates, citizens and local criminal justice agencies) must be conducted. This identifies perceptions of the main weaknesses of the current classification. These must be linked to an analysis of the technical deficiencies of the current classification. Basic questions include:

- What goals and standards are being violated by the current classification system?
- What line staff requirements are not being met?
- What management requirements are not being met?
- What requirements of the legal system are not being met?
- What information needs are not being met by the present system?
- What management problems are facing the jail?  
(Overcrowding, housing problems, discipline and safety, etc)
- Etc.

Answers to these questions are usually provided by interviewing the various stakeholders and users of the classification (i.e. determining needs, deficits, problems and goals). Substantial disagreement among stakeholders on prioritizing the classification goals and policies may emerge. The deficiencies and goals should be discussed in meetings with interviewees.

### **Communicating a Clear Vision of What is to be Accomplished**

Top managers and consultants must communicate a clear vision of what is to be accomplished by a new classification (i.e. intended goals, policies and benefits). All key players and stakeholders must understand this vision and share commitment to it. This vision of classification goals coordinates the whole effort. It guides choices of method, motivates actions and the adoption of new policies and organizational structures. It provides justification and rationale for new procedures and needed resources. Both line and management staff must understand the need for change and the expected benefits of the new classification. The rationale which supports the change must be communicated to staff by top management to help ensure the "buy in" process.

### **Obtaining Consensus on "Vision" by Drafting a Statement of Impact**

Unfortunately, senior jail administrators often lack a strategic vision of the role and mission of classification. One tactic is for core managers to discuss and/or draft an "Impact Statement" of how the new classification will strengthen the

main correctional goals of the jail. In this way, administrators, managers and line staff may develop a clearer appreciation of the need for a new system and its likely benefits. Different jail units may become sensitized to their common interest and need for cooperation. This promotes useful dialogue between consultants and technicians developing the system, administrators, and line users. If a jail has a policy formation group, the impact statement may be integrated into written policy to further achieve consensus.

Most organizations resist change, and jails are no exception. Change is only accepted if it is tied to necessary and desirable improvements in jail functioning. Thus, the impact statement must emphasize general organizational improvement, and must link classification to specific correctional goals. Expected improvements give a basic justification for new procedures. Walton (1989) found this "improvement" theme to be critical in preventing conflict between organizational units that may be differentially affected by new procedures. All units affected by changes in classification must understand the goals of overall institutional improvement.

Awareness of current deficiencies, new goals and expected benefits will usually strengthen the motivation to persevere with implementation and overcome complacency or resistance among some staff. Continued encouragement from top administrators and reminders of benefits are required in all implementation phases.

### **Obtaining Consensus on Goals of the New Classification**

The goals for classification must be identified prior to the selection of specific technological means for fulfilling them. Many classification systems exist. A single method cannot be blindly imposed in all jail situations.

Explicit classification goals will progressively become clarified during the above pre-implementation tasks. Educating and training staff on principles of correct classification, using their views of current deficits, their own information needs, and their "impact statement" all contribute in drafting clear goals and expectations for a new classification.

The multiplicity of classification goals in jails and how to prioritize them is a common problem (Alexander 1983; Fowler and Rans 1983). A review of classification goals in jails is provided by Brennan (1987). The following briefly lists some of these goals.

#### a) Goals of Concern to Jail Staff

- Ensure efficient use of jail resources (space, staff, programs) by avoiding over or under-classification, and thus minimize waste of jail resources
- Classify accurately, efficiently and speedily

- Achieve orderly operations and discipline through appropriate separation and housing.
- Minimize inmate to inmate conflict, violence and victimization
- Ensure documentation and legal protection for decisions or actions of jail staff (proof of validity of officer decisions and actions)
- Comply with legal requirements regarding classification procedures, due process and legitimate inmate's rights.
- Ensure staff safety by correct classification of dangerous inmates
- Monitor changes in the inmate population using classification data
- Ensure good communication and coordination in the facility
- Provide data for budgeting, program planning and resource allocations
- Provide data for monitoring the achievement of various policy objectives
- Etc.

b) Goals of Concern to Inmates

- Protection and safety
- Separation of violent inmates from victim types
- Equity, fairness and consistency
- Inmate participation and access to information
- Access to appropriate treatments and identification of needs
- Incarceration at the least restrictive custody level

c) Goals of Concern to Citizens

- Ensure public safety through valid classification and security arrangements
- Ensure cost efficiency by incarcerating at least restrictive custody level
- Enhance rehabilitation by minimizing isolation from the community, and by re-integration consistent with public safety
- Enhance rehabilitation and reduce future crime by correct classification of inmate needs and provision of appropriate treatments
- Reduce criminal "contamination" by validly separating habitual criminals from younger inexperienced youth.

d) Goals of Concern to the Local Criminal Justice System

- Efficient use of limited jail resources
- Cost effectiveness
- Identification of inmate sub-populations for alternative management options
- Encouragement of inmate involvement in various treatment programs (i.e., behavior modification).

This long list of goals indicates that jails and the local criminal justice system use

classification to achieve numerous purposes and that classification plays a complex role in the jail. Several issues regarding goals are important:

### **Clarity of Purpose vs. Vague Expectations**

One problem is vagueness regarding what jail managers want to achieve from their classification system. Too frequently objective classification systems are introduced with only vague specification of purposes and a poor understanding of its relationship to other organizational goals of the jail and local criminal justice systems. Jail administrators and consultants must achieve such precision.

### **Goals are Often Non-Measurable**

Another failing is that goals are stated in a vague, non-measurable, and ambiguous manner. Goal achievement and jail performance can only be assessed if measurable indicators exist for each goal. This confusion must be addressed by the management team designing the system. Such measures will describe jail performance at both management and line levels.

### **Unresolved Goal Conflicts are Often Passively Delegated to Line Staff**

Many correctional goals conflict with each other. The most serious conflict is between inmate goals (least restrictive custody; access to treatment and community) versus security and law enforcement goals (security and public safety, etc). This conflict often remains unresolved and is passed downward - by default - to line levels without the provision of explicit classification guidelines to resolve the conflict. Line staff simply resolve this issue by classifying in a way that minimizes their personal accountability, maximizes CYA, and fulfills certain personal biases. A consequence is that systematic over-classification usually occurs. This creates enormous waste and undermines jail efficiency and the classification system. Policy conflict and prioritization should be squarely faced by management and not passed downward to line staff.

### **Classification and Direct Supervision Jails**

With the recent trend toward direct supervision jails, the question of the potential role of inmate classification within such a model is frequently being asked. In traditional jails (first generation linear design, and second generation indirect surveillance jails) the role of objective inmate classification systems has been quite well defined. An inmate classification system can help identify those inmates who present a grave threat to themselves, staff, other inmates, or the community. Subsequently, such inmates can be assigned appropriate housing and supervision relative to the degree of assessed risk.

Frequently, in traditional jails, this results in maximum, medium, and minimum security inmates being housed separately from each other, if the facility design

and cell space permit. This has been demonstrated to work well for the management of the general inmate population for these two traditional jail designs. But, can (or should) inmate classification play the same or similar role in a direct supervision jail? For instance, what is the potential impact of classification on overcrowding? What role can classification play in decisions to board inmates in other correctional facilities? Can classification help in identifying direct supervision inmates eligible for work release, non-secure trustee positions, or minimum security housing? To address these questions let's look at them in relation to the four primary functions of classification previously discussed, including determining factors of inmate/staff safety, equity/fairness/consistency, public safety and community-based programs, and correctional facility management and planning.

Inmate/Staff Safety: One of the primary functions of jail/inmate classification systems is as a tool assisting jail administrators and staff in assessing and identifying the dangerous or potential problem inmate in order to make appropriate housing, supervision, medical care, and treatment decisions. In most jails this assessment should occur at two distinct stages of incarceration: 1) at booking or intake for temporary management decisions, and 2) before the inmate is moved to general population for longer-term housing assignment, needs assessment, and program referral. With respect to the initial classification stage at intake (assessment of various factors including medical treatment needs, suicide risk, appropriate temporary housing, etc.), the function of inmate classification remains essentially the same for all supervision models.

At the second stage of classifying the longer-term inmate to general housing, the function of inmate classification may be different for direct supervision jails. While the issue of identifying the high risk or problem inmates (i.e., assaultive, suicidal, mental illness, etc.) and separating them from the general population is the same for both models, the difference may be found in the housing policy of the facility. Frequently, direct supervision jails adopt a housing policy of mixing maximum, medium, and minimum security inmates together in the same housing unit. In such instances, the application of classification is not critical to housing assignments. Some direct supervision jails, on the other hand, may choose the housing policy of separating *minimum* custody level inmates to take advantage of less expensive housing options and reduced staff supervision levels while still operating under the direct supervision model. Obviously, classification has a useful role to play in this circumstance.

The point here is that the use of classification for security decisions, knowing what kind of inmate is where, is the same for traditional and direct supervision models; the difference lies chiefly in the relationship between the assessed security levels of inmates and the housing policies a specific facility chooses to meet its objectives.

Equity/Fairness/Consistency: An objective inmate classification system, regardless of the type of supervision/facility model, provides for equity, fairness, and consistency in managing the general inmate population. In principle, all inmates should be classified by the same objective criteria supported by specific policies and procedures, including designated housing areas, decision guidelines, and program eligibility criteria. This provides reasoning to support the decision-making process and eliminates arbitrary decisions. For example, the various security level classifications should define and determine an appropriate range of eligibility for certain programs, privileges (e.g., day release or "trustee" positions for minimum security inmates, etc.). This also supports a system of behavior modification providing incentives for the inmate to address any assessed needs and to promote positive behavior consistent with the direct supervision philosophy.

A necessary component for this application of classification is a regular periodic review of an inmate's current security level classification. This provides structure for monitoring and tracking inmate behavior, and allows for the inmate to work his way to a lower security level (i.e., increased eligibility for programs, housing, special privileges), or, conversely, to higher security levels (i.e., restricted housing, programming, etc.) as a result of behavioral problems. Obviously, factors such as the offenses for which they are incarcerated may limit the security level an inmate may achieve.

Regardless of the supervision model used, the principle of security/fairness/consistency is very important, and provides a base from which management decisions are made.

Public Safety and Community-Based Alternative Programs: Regardless of whether a jail is operating under the more traditional models or the direct supervision model, and regardless of the degree to which classification determines housing decisions, classification is perhaps most instrumental in its potential application to alleviate overcrowding, community-based correction programs, and public safety.

With the ever-increasing problem of jail overcrowding, jail administrators and local criminal justice policymakers are increasingly faced with the question of which offenders are going to take up the jail's limited space and resources. This problem can be addressed either at the front end, in determining punishment options at sentencing, or at the back end, in determining which sentenced inmates may qualify to serve a portion of their jail term and then be recommended for early release into community-based programs such as community service work, residential treatment, or intensive probation. To facilitate this process a good classification system, regardless of the supervision model, should help to identify those inmates which have the best chance of successfully completing the community-based sanction while minimizing the risk

to public safety.

Efficient Facility Planning and Management: Classification, and the inmate data it provides in conjunction with other important booking and release information, can play a significant role in facility planning and management. Knowing who is in the jail, offense type, crime classification, length of stay, security classification profile, etc. (in short, an objective inmate population profile), are critical factors in this jail management process. An obvious application includes assistance in identifying the type of facility construction (minimum to maximum) needed to handle the local offender population. Typically, new jail construction "over-builds" in terms of costly maximum security cell space, especially in rural areas, relative to the actual security profile of the inmate population in that area. Inmate data derived from classification may, if available during the planning process for new jail construction, or renovation, significantly reduce expenses by providing a wider range of options of housing, including direct supervision.

As previously mentioned, the inmate information provided by a good classification and MIS system can identify target subpopulations within the overall inmate population for which specific management/program options may be discussed.

The applications of a good inmate classification system in traditional jails suggests that these functions are similar for both traditional jail supervision models and the direct supervision model, with one important distinction. The same decision-making criteria provided by a good classification system, supporting the primary functions of classification, should be applicable and relevant regardless of the type of supervision model used. The primary difference in the application of a good objective classification system, in the context of these differing supervision models, is in the role classification plays in determining housing decisions, which remain the individual choice of the jail administration. The primary factor for determining whether an inmate in a direct supervision jail is housed in a group pod or in a segregated area is in assessing his institutional behavior, special needs, and ability to get along with other inmates. All other basic applications of inmate classification hold similar potential in facilitating efficient and cost-effective jail management and planning for direct supervision jails.

### **2.3 Building Alignment Between the Classification System and Jail Goals**

Three broad implementation goals must be addressed in the pre-implementation phase i.e. 1) building alignment, 2) building support and 3) building competence. These three goals recur in all later stages of implementation. They introduce coherence at each stage of the implementation process and alert managers to specific tasks to be addressed sequentially. The three building blocks (i.e., Alignment, Support, and Competence) are defined in the remainder of this chapter.

The concept of alignment implies that the classification method is consistent with: jail goals, jail organizational structure, staffing and policies (Walton 1989). When any of these are out of alignment, implementation is difficult or impossible.

Misalignment exists, for example, when a jail adopts the goal of "least restrictive custody" and then selects a method of classification that virtually guarantees that vast numbers of inmates are over classified (Austin and Litsky 1980; Austin 1983; Brennan 1987). Another example of misalignment occurs when a complex classification system is adopted and the jail fails to provide sufficient staff, training, or other resources to do the work. In this instance organizational structure is misaligned with job requirements of the selected classification design. Misalignment can also occur when staff are trained to rely on a "command and control" structure but are given classification methods that require initiative and independent judgement. Line classification officers typically respond with a "going by the book" or CYA stance, which both undermine the validity of classification.

In these instances the classification method and organizational structure are misaligned. Alignment is critical in all implementation phases.

Having established the goals of classification, the technical consultants and MIS staff can then begin to design classification methods to achieve these goals. This involves technical decisions on several aspects of classification methods: risk factors, a classification logic (decision tree, point scale), a predictive method (regression, prediction trees) versus a logical method, data indices and various reports aimed at meeting both management and line staff needs, etc. These technical decisions must ensure that the design of classification methods is in alignment with jail policies and goals, and will meet the information needs of management, staff, and other stakeholders. As noted earlier, alignment between "method design" and jail goals/policies is usually left implicit. When, the desired "benefits" have failed to materialize it is often due to misalignment between method and jail policies.

Jail managers must recognize that profoundly different classification methods can be developed to achieve different correctional goals. For example, an

important alignment issue is whether the classification method should be "predictive" or "descriptive". In certain situations, correctional agencies may desire prediction of some risk. Pretrial release decisions, for example, focus on failure to appear and recidivism. In such situations predictive methods may be developed. However, serious questions have been raised regarding the low predictive validity of such approaches (Monahan 1981; Gottfredson 1987; Brennan 1987). The dangers and ethical problems stemming from false positive errors have resulted in many correctional managers avoiding the use of predictive methods (Solomon and Baird 1983). Thus, in many correctional situations an alternative aim is to achieve logical, consistent and orderly processing of detainees for primarily internal management decisions. Care must be taken to align a new classification to the specific requirements and needs of a jail. Many alignment issues must be addressed in designing a method of classification. These include:

- Is the method consistent with desired policies and goals? (i.e. Will it have a chance of achieving these policies?)
- Is the method consistent with legal requirements?
- Is the chosen method consistent with available staff skills?
- Is the chosen method practically feasible, or will it impose unrealistic burdens of time, effort, or difficulty on staff?
- Is the method consistent with current scientific standards of validity and reliability?
- Does it impose too many or too few classification categories on the facility?

Jail managers seldom systematically examine the above alignment issues between a "classification method" and the practical, legal and strategic policy goals of the jail. An unfortunate consequence is that jails select inappropriate classification systems and then impose these on their organization and staff. There should be no surprise at the consequent failure and abandonment of such systems.

To achieve alignment, the implementation team - often with help from a consultant - must compare and evaluate various classification approaches. Much of this comparative work is done by logical analysis of characteristics, weaknesses, strengths, and major purposes of candidate classification systems.

Following this alignment review, staff can conduct a pilot experiment with the various classifications using a small sample of inmate data. A pilot study can compare and evaluate different classification methods, and assess the degree to

which different methods meet the various needs of the jail. Feedback from the line staff and other users is critical during a pilot study.

## **2.4 Building Political Commitment and Staff Support**

Another critical task during pre-implementation is to develop a supportive coalition for the implementation effort. Several support building activities are initiated during pre-implementation and may occur concurrently with the above alignment tasks.

### **Building the Coalition: Obtaining and Consolidating Support**

If possible support should be lined up before the project is generally announced. Thus, identification of all users, stakeholders and key actors - whose support is needed - must occur early. It is advisable to obtain the support of all key administrators who have influence and authority in the jail.

Informal meetings should be held with those who are both supportive and who have influence. Additional meetings can be arranged to educate and persuade other stakeholders regarding the need for new classification procedures and policies. Technical assistance is helpful during these meetings, since this requires presentations, discussions of current deficiencies, reviews of expected benefits, and considerations of the needs of all key stakeholders.

When early support is coalescing among the major actors, a bandwagon or "multiplier effect" often occurs. This effect might be enhanced by public and other criminal justice actors' statements of support - both verbal and written - and unified commitment from top management. At this point, it is safer to approach the more resistant managers. This early coalition is helpful in motivating resistant personnel to join the effort.

### **Early Meetings Among Extended Stakeholders**

Meetings with the extended set of stakeholders may be helpful in several ways. These usually occur following the above meetings between the critical managers and administrators. They broaden involvement to include actors who are less central but who may still be impacted by the results of classification. Security staff, treatment managers, the courts, local treatment agency managers, and perhaps a citizens advisory group may be informed and their input solicited. Obviously, local political judgement is required to ensure that the meetings are productive.

These more extended early meetings have several functions:

- To convey top management's commitment to the project

- To ensure that no one is left out of "the loop"
- To identify unexpected problems, perspectives, or opportunities, for the new classification
- To improve communication
- To consolidate consensus on the vision and expectations
- To clarify any roles these actors may have in implementation
- To further identify ways that an improved classification can help them in their work (i.e. What do they want from classification?)
- To improve personal relations among the users of classification
- To identify if new communication channels are needed regarding inmate classification.
- To communicate likely impact of the new system on personnel issues, communication and organizational patterns.
- To begin to breakdown and neutralize resistance.

Studies of the implementation process have found that informed political support is vital (Schoech 1982, Walton 1989). Any new procedure (e.g. classification) with broad organizational impact will require broad and informed support. Some jail units will gain power, others may lose, while some may carry a greater share of the costs of the change. The strategic potential of the new classification must be clearly understood by all stakeholders, so that they can use it to their advantage. Classification data has many important uses for monitoring, assessing and evaluating various operations of the jail, as well as for various decision-making functions both inside and outside the jail.

These stakeholder meetings also help to improve the alignment and design of the classification, since more perspectives and insights are gained from each stakeholder's needs and perspectives. The major concerns of all specific units (e.g. data entry staff, medical staff, etc.) should be raised early enough to take action. Their support will be more sustained if they feel included and informed about the early planning of the project. If a stakeholder's approval is ill-informed or based on misunderstanding, these may evolve into various forms of resistance or sabotage.

## **Ensuring Funding Support from Start to Finish**

An important task during pre-implementation is to ensure adequate funding for the full duration of the process. This is a task for jail management, the consultant, and the implementation team.

Cost benefit considerations often emerge when considering the funding of a new classification. It can be noted that the cost of a good classification system is minimal compared to the costs incurred by one serious escape incident, one jail victimization incident or assault, or one serious lawsuit. Yet, many jail managers ignore the fact that a valid classification system is essential in preventing such negative events. Thus, the cost-benefit aspects of classification can be used in justifying the costs of the new classification.

Since the positive effects of correct classification decisions ramify throughout the jail, and also into several criminal justice agencies, it may be argued that new classification procedures might be funded from a broader source than simply the jail. This explicates the "system wide" value of classification and may produce more reliable commitment of funds for classification. Reliable funding is critical because of the frequent turnover of top administrators. Many implementation efforts have been cut in midstream and funding lost, due to turnover of top jail administrators.

## **Ensuring Top Management's Awareness of Time/Costs of Implementation**

To ensure an appropriate implementation budget, the expected costs, staffing and time for implementation must be estimated. These partially depend on the current state of the jail's operational status, classification system, and the amount of change expected. Typical cost categories include: personnel, training, technical support, new computer equipment, new software, modifications to existing software, supplies, office space, storage systems, etc. More precise estimations, sequencing and timing of tasks will be developed as the Transitional Manager plans for the implementation phase.

There is a tendency to underestimate (or omit) costs associated with "people problems" (e.g. staff training at both line and management levels, the politics of maintaining political support, resolving conflicts, dealing with staff disruption and sabotage, and other unexpected issues). "People problems" may account for a high proportion of costs when implementing a new classification system.

Cost of classification per detainee is a useful baseline measure. Average staff time for the various classification tasks can be established (e.g. interviewing key staff, reviewing their paperwork tasks, collecting and verifying data, making referral arrangements, filing documents, updating computer records, etc.). These various costs may be averaged for different classes of detainees. With an

automated objective system it is useful to compare cost data of the new classification with the old system.

### **Planning to Ensure Acceptance at the Line Level**

While the "people work" to ensure top management support is critical there are compelling reasons to work for commitment at the mid management and line level. Several practices have been successful in building the support and commitment of correctional staff.

- a) Ensure that the goals/expectations are known and understood: Identify the deficiencies of the current system, the strengths of the new system and long range advantages. Many of the line classification officers will already be aware of the problems and deficiencies of the old system since they are often "closest" to the problems.
- b) Maintain frequent contact during the period of change: The consultant and top management should provide continuing reassurance and encouragement to line staff during the project. Additionally the consultant should promote the benefits of the new classification to both line employees and management.
- c) Constant feedback on progress should be given: This should start at pre-implementation and continue for the duration of the project. All critical stakeholders should be informed of progress.
- d) Allow broad participation of line staff: Involve them in planning and design deliberations, and create opportunities for suggestions and on-going feedback.
- e) Recognize and address threats to security/power: Power issues and threats to job security often emerge during implementation. Personal and political conflicts may emerge due to power shifts and security threats. Trust-building efforts may have to be aimed at "senior" line staff who are most identified with current classification methods. They must be reassured that their seniority will not be undermined, and be given extra opportunities for involvement and input. Any negative responses must be creatively re-directed to facilitate positive change.

### **Predicting Sources of Resistance**

Resistance to change in jails must be understood in order to deal with it appropriately. Several sources of resistance have been identified during current jail implementation efforts:

- a) Fear of Change: This may occur among long- term employees who may experience uncertainty, unfamiliarity, or anxiety regarding new policies or procedures used in their job. Staff who are most familiar with the current

classification may exhibit resentment and resistance. They may see the new classification as introducing the following problems:

- Excessive complexity,
- Job role ambiguity,
- Denying their professional judgment,
- Reducing their decision- making autonomy,
- Reducing their degree of control over inmates,
- Etc.

b) Power Shifts and Political Conflict: Changes in jail procedures and policies often involve threats to status, power, ego, and job security. New inmate classification procedures - particularly the shift from subjective to objective systems - can introduce profound power shifts. These shifts result from several factors:

- Objective classification methods produce and organize large volumes of jail data in ways that can augment managerial monitoring and control and thus increase managerial power.
- There may be profound upgrading to the content of information and efficiency of data flow through the jail.
- New classification methods will change decision-making procedures for both inmate processing and management. Line staff autonomy and discretion may be reduced.
- New methods may create new inmate referral patterns through the jail and into community and treatment programs.
- New classification data may influence management decisions regarding resource allocation and planning.
- New classification data may improve forecasting and planning (e.g. for building new facility extensions).

Power shifts in complex organizations, such as jails, are often unpredictable. Certain jail units or staff may experience an overall loss of decision-making autonomy, resources and power. Yet, some power shifts are predictable when a new classification is introduced. For example, security staff may sometimes lose power relative to classification staff (e.g. over housing or decisions regarding inmate privileges). More sophisticated personnel, who effectively learn to use the new data to their advantage may gain power at the expense of less sophisticated personnel. Changes in superior-subordinate relationships may emerge as different units or staff differentially master the new procedures.

Certain managers and technically educated staff, with skills in analyzing data and controlling its flow, tend to gain power.

Data becomes more powerful when used for political and administrative purposes (e.g. planning, monitoring, forecasting and policy decisions). Objective classification data can be transformed into policy-relevant knowledge about numerous jail processes. Departments and personnel with access to this data may have increased power compared to managers and departments who do not have access to this data, or who have secondary and/or later access. Top managers who receive the data for decision-making and monitoring purposes, and classification managers who produce it may gain power relative to managers and departments with low access, who remain unaware of the policy uses of classification data, or who lack appropriate technical skills. Political conflicts, however, may undermine the new system by preventing the free movement of data from one unit to another. Such interference to data access may cause havoc with both the MIS and Classification Departments, and undermine their contributions to the performance of the jail as a whole.

c) Resistance from Top Managers Due to Desire for Autonomy and Independence:

Change is often resisted more fiercely by top jail managers than by line staff. Whistler (1970) noted that the potential for resisting new ideas rises in proportion to the authority and power of the manager who must accommodate or accept the new policies or procedures. Many high level managers are unaccustomed to having bureaucratic tasks or changes imposed on them. Many top administrators are accustomed to autonomy and authority, and often view their jails as their own "personal fiefdoms". Resistance at high administrator levels may require outside intervention (Court Orders, etc.) and tactful re-education and justification for change.

d) Local Jail Culture: When implementing a new classification system in jails, the Implementation Manager must be aware of local norms and jail culture which sometimes constitute formidable barriers to change. For example, the National Center for State Courts, in a study of implementation of changes to reduce court delays, identified "local legal culture" as a critical influence on the implementation process. This local culture consisted of the informal work norms and values of court staff. It posed serious barriers to the attempts to accelerate case processing and led to much resistance. A similar culture often occurs in jails. The introduction of new classification procedures will be resisted if it is seen as inconsistent with current norms and values of the jail staff.

**Linking Reward Systems to New Performance Criteria**

A powerful tactic to motivate correct use of new procedures and overcome resistance is to link staff performance appraisal to correct use of the new system.

Thus, line staff and managers are monitored on whether they use the new procedures consistently and correctly. This approach requires the political support of top administrators, since control over rewards and job appraisals are required. Also, valid criteria for correct use of classification must be developed (e.g. data entry errors, classification errors, over classifications, omitting written justifications for override, etc.). Fair and informative feedback criteria must be developed for systematic and regular reports to staff. In these ways, upward mobility and job appraisal is linked with acceptance and correct use of the new classification. Appraisal criteria are needed for both line and management uses of classification.

## **2.5 Staffing and Planning During the Pre-Implementation Effort**

Planning must begin during pre-implementation and staff selected to handle the implementation process. Major staffing and planning needs include: A Transition Manager, a Transition or Implementation Team, a high level Steering Committee, a Resources Plan, an Overall Implementation Plan which includes: timelines, monitoring and regular feedback procedures for top management review and approval. These are now considered in more detail.

A Transition Manager must be found to assume overall executive responsibility for the implementation effort. Numerous studies of implementation have found that most successful organizational change efforts benefit from the presence of this key transitional leader (Shoech 1982). An external consultant with sufficient expertise and organizational support can sometimes assume this role. More generally, the person is selected from the management ranks of the jail.

This manager's skills and resources are critical to the success of the whole effort. This manager must thoroughly understand the politics of the jail, have both technical and managerial skills, be accepted by both line and management staff, and be able to make compromises and quick decisions. The fundamental abilities are those required to move a bureaucracy through complex change. Management and planning skills are critical given the need for coordination of many end-users and stakeholders. A managerial type with some technical skills is usually preferred over strictly technical candidates because of the importance of political, planning and management skills.

Problems often occur in selecting the Transitional Manager and inappropriate persons may be selected. This results from an extreme shortage of candidates with the appropriate mix of managerial and technical skills. Another problem is over-dependence on one individual. This person often becomes the core of the implementation effort and if he or she changes jobs or positions the implementation effort may fail.

An Implementation Team must be created. This is a temporary task force of managers, line workers, and consultants who work together for the duration of

the implementation effort. The breadth of membership in the Implementation Team is important, since it promotes higher involvement by different departments of the jail.

This team should include representatives from management, technical staff from computer services, key managers of jail units with high stakes in classification, an external consultant, the Transitional Manager and one or two classification unit representatives. An appropriate balance of these personnel is critical (Biksen et al 1989) since the aim is to achieve broad input on the many decisions and plans of the team. The plans, decisions, and deliberations of this team should reflect the needs and orientations of all stakeholders.

This team will manage most of the activities associated with the on-going implementation. This group has executive powers and responsibilities regarding all implementation plans and activities. Aside from a general emphasis on problem solving, these activities might include:

- Designing specifications for the classification methods.
- Making specific implementation plans.
- Writing policy and procedures.
- Obtaining top management approval for completed design and policy issues.
- Reaching resolution on any problems that arise.
- Supervising line staff as they conduct specific tasks.
- Documenting progress and reasons for delay.
- Provide feedback reports to other top managers and department heads in regular review meetings.

Feedback procedures to top management should be clearly specified, and responsibility for documenting these meetings and obtaining "sign-offs" specified. Responsibilities for all tasks should be explicitly allocated.

### **Creating Project Plans**

Simple and concise implementation plans should be developed and updated in a series of strategic planning meetings of the implementation task force. Initial plans should be brief and used as a basis for discussions to guide final specification of tasks. Planning meetings should include the following kinds of issues:

- Identification of expected problems or obstacles and how these can be handled,
- Estimation of any additional resources needed for implementation,
- Estimate of staffing needs, office space needs, and other resources for implementation,

- Identify all changes proposed to the classification design,
- Document reasons why the changes are important,
- Specify task sequences, and responsibilities for each task,
- Specify monitoring procedures to assess task completion.
- Design progress reports to top management, and specify attendees at these feedback meetings,
- Etc.

In addition a pilot project should be included to gauge any unknowns, and for refinement of the prototype classification system that emerges from the design phase.

## **2.6 Anticipating the Impact of a New Classification System on the Jail**

"People-problems" often present the most serious obstacles to the success of implementation. In jails, pretrial programs, and courts, such side effects have often caused the failure of new systems (Bohnstedt and Geiser 1978). The human and social side effects of new technologies - e.g. objective jail classification - may often undermine the effectiveness of the innovation. Walton (1989) has noted the damaging side effects of technological innovation in organizations. Thus during pre-implementation the transition team must try to forecast the expected influence of the new classification system on the jail. It is important to note that the influence and impact of the new classification system may not be fully anticipated at this pre-implementation phase of the project.

In jail management, there has been little effort to predict or manage the personnel and organizational impacts when introducing new objective classification procedures. This oversight stems from a lack of knowledge of what to expect, and of what organizational adjustments are needed when introducing new classification policies and procedures. The implementation team and consultant initially might try to predict the effects of the new classification system on the jail by thinking through, discussing, and/or writing an Organizational Impact statement. This tries to forecast implications for the jail and answer several questions regarding the impact of the new system. For example:

- What procedures, in what units, will be changed?
- Who will be most affected?
- What will be the impact on job definitions?
- How will the new data change decision-making at different inmate processing points across the jail?
- Who might lose autonomy or decision-making power?
- Who might resist the new system?
- Who might pay higher costs?
- Who may benefit the most?

- Will new data change referral patterns to agencies outside the jail?
- Will there be changes in social interaction among staff, between units within the jail, or between the jail and outside agencies
- Etc.

Anticipating the likely impacts will help the implementation team plan for personnel adjustments, resource allocations, and new data flow channels that may be needed. Forecasts of the likely impact may suggest changes in personnel arrangements, additional staff for certain units, new data analyses needed to encourage use of classification data, etc. Managerial and line staff in critical positions might be forewarned that the new classification procedures may bring changes, and the impact assessment may be used as a basis of early discussions with them regarding adjustment strategies.

The impact of the new procedures on the classification unit and on their managers may imply redesign of certain jobs and the breaking of old habits.

Impact on Work Overload: What is the impact on workflow and overload? Many line classification and/or corrections officers are chronically overloaded and barely keep up with workload requirements. Care must be taken that the new procedures are not simply added to the current workflow. In other cases automated classification methods may transform tasks to become more routinized, more efficient, so that they require less time and are more streamlined. In this latter instance, fewer staff may be required. In other instances, new tasks emerge as the staff and management learn how best to make use of the new system, so that the information is used in more creative ways. If several additional information processing tasks are added, the workload may reach crisis levels and more staff or new job descriptions may be added to the classification unit.

Impact on Line Worker Status and Power: Power and authority are critical issues when line correctional officers have much face-to-face interaction with inmates. Automated and objective systems are sometimes implemented in a way that eliminates or reduces officer' discretion, weakens their decision-making autonomy, and thus lowers their authority and sanctioning power over inmates (Brennan 1983). The morale of some line officers may be devastated if they think they can be replaced by an automated system. Care must be taken to retain a role for staff discretion, experience, and personal judgment.

Impact on social interaction and social communication: The information flow and communication patterns in the jail may change unpredictably when switching to objective classification. This may require a systematic assessment of the information content, communication channels, and information needs of different staff at different decision points. Those with a "need to know" must be included in new information channels. A common problem is that automated and objective classification may "isolate" the classification unit from inmates,

other jail units, and management, so that it becomes primarily a "data entry" and verification activity. This may occur when classification staff work completely with jail records, do not conduct inmate interviews, focus mainly on data entry tasks, and have little contact with staff or inmates. Their sense of "role" and importance may evaporate when working in such a vacuum. In fact, an appropriate objective classification system should emphasize inmate contact through initial interviews and the on-going classification review process.

Impact on Job Enrichment, Professional Growth and the Informing Process:

Consideration must also be given to the "quality" of the jobs in the classification unit. Jail classification officers and their managers are in a unique position to be enriched or impoverished by their tasks. They work at the confluence of data flow through the jail. Enrichment and higher involvement can occur if they are provided feedback on the "big picture" of the jail and how their work relates to overall jail policies. Walton (1989) refers to this process as the degree to which staff are "informed" by careful feedback of information. Jail classification statistics and data feedback to staff (both line and management) has enormous educational potential if designed appropriately and if relevant statistics are routinely provided to workers. However, without such informing feedback workers conduct their tasks in a vacuum with little learning or understanding of how their jobs fit into the big picture of the jail.

The impact and use of the new classification and its data may thus heighten or reduce job involvement, learning opportunities, and whether staff experience a sense of mastery or alienation. If they work in a social or information vacuum, the meaning of classification work erodes. Alienated jail staff sometimes claim that their classification is simply a "paper process" with little relation to what really happens in the jail. This meaninglessness will emerge among both line and managerial staff if classification is conducted in a void.

Job enrichment or impoverishment is also influenced by whether the new classification makes the tasks more or less specialized, more or less routinized, and more or less skilled. Objective classification has the potential to promote either of these directions. Classification jobs, using computerized systems can be narrowed, routinized, specialized and simplified so that line workers may experience dull monotony and loss of responsibility. Care must be taken to design the classification job so that it offers appropriate levels of responsibility and difficulty, opportunities for professional growth and informative feedback to ensure job enrichment and meaningfulness.

The issue of job enrichment is also critical for jail managers. A central issue is whether management utilizes classification data for planning, monitoring and policy decisions. The data is usually available in most jails but is seldom appropriately collected and analyzed and transformed into new insights to inform management about various aspects of jail processing, trends, and policy achievement. Classification data usually is provided to jail managers in a state

that is virtually useless for management concerns, such as: overcrowding, litigation, staffing needs, planning and forecasting, and renovation. Most management reports promote boredom and incomprehension rather than involvement, learning or insight. Thus, the use of classification reports to promote learning and growth - at both management and line level - cannot be overlooked by the Implementation Team.

#### Impact on Organizational and Political Aspects of a Jail

Few studies have examined the impact of objective classification on the organizational and political dynamics of jails. However, the following themes may be considered as a jail switches from subjective to objective classification methods.

Impact on supervision style and monitoring: Objective classifications linked to computerized data bases allow detailed monitoring of performance levels, classification data errors, workload levels, over or under classification error levels, override rates, links between classification and discipline problems, population security profiles and so on. This, in turn, enhances the potential for management to use this data for informative feedback to staff, monitoring and overt control over staff. Certain managers may emphasize coercive monitoring to achieve tighter compliance with formal jail procedures and policies. Although coercive monitoring make many jail managers more secure, its negative effects may include: externally forced compliance, resentment, weaker staff ownership of jail goals, weaker sense of accountability, higher levels of CYA, passivity in problem solving, and a higher possibility of covert sabotage. Alternatively, managers may adopt (as noted earlier) an "informating" style aimed at enhancing self-management, autonomy and self-monitoring by line officers (Walton 1989). This latter style appears to promote professional growth, learning and autonomy, which in turn fosters more commitment, self-responsibility, ownership and problem-solving among staff.

Traditional jails with a strong "chain of command" management hierarchies will probably continue the coercive monitoring style that is normative in such organizations. The Implementation Team must achieve a balance between these directions and design a jail monitoring and feedback system for the classification unit to achieve this balance. This dichotomy of supervision styles has critical effects on the kind of compliance and commitment produced among line workers.

Impact on Dependency Levels Within the Jail: New objective classification procedures may profoundly influence decision-making authority, access to new information, and dependency on information. Some decisions, at both line and management levels, may become more dependent on the information produced by classification. Security decisions, housing movements, community access, program eligibility and so on, become more dependent on the classification as

the new system gains in credibility, and is seen as providing critical documentation for certain decisions. Staff in other jail units (e.g. security) may become more dependent on the classification unit for timely provision of data. These power adjustments may occur only at the line level if classification is restricted to line level decision making. However, if the data is aggregated and has greater value for policy decisions, then power adjustments and changes in dependency relations may occur at higher levels of the jail.

Impact on the Size of Classification Unit and the Number of Hierarchical Levels:

New classification methods, particularly if automated, may transform the efficiency of line work and suggest new ways of using classification data, and new data analysis procedures. They ultimately may change the size and structure of the classification unit. Thought must be given to this issue during the implementation effort.

## **2.7 Building Competence and Skill**

A third critical task during pre-implementation is to build the skills and competence of line and managerial staff. Several strategies are possible. Not all of the procedures described below are needed in all jails and they can be used selectively.

### **Building Competence Among Managers**

It is not uncommon in jails to find managers in organizationally critical positions who have minimal skills, knowledge of, or interest, in classification; or in the more generic managerial skills of planning, data analysis, and so on. It is more discouraging to find low motivation, disinterest and a widespread CYA approach rather than a responsible problem-solving approach to work challenges. For example, many jail managers become "interested" in classification only because of outside law suits, and not because they are aware of the profound role that classification can play in the management of a jail. Thus, poor management training, low skills, low motivation and the disinterest of jail managers frequently causes the downfall of new classification systems. Fowler and Rans (1983) note that many jail managers pay only "lip service" to the need for classification and essentially ignore classification, until a court order forces it onto their attention. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC), the American Jail Association (AJA), the American Correctional Association (ACA), have, for years, attempted to upgrade jail administrator and middle management skills in classification (and other topics) by offering training programs in classification aimed at top and mid-level jail managers.

Management deficiencies usually emerge for several reasons, including:

- A lack of training in the techniques of classification
- Failure to understand the many uses of classification in jails

- Failure to understand the connection between classification and the broad correctional goals a jail and the local criminal justice system is trying to achieve.
- Failure to set up an appropriate monitoring and feedback system for the classification unit
- Failure to use classification data for management purposes

The consultant may be in the awkward position of having to assess the skills, abilities, and motivations of a jail manager (e.g. do they possess sufficient skills to implement, use, support, supervise and monitor the classification unit). This awkward situation must be handled with tact to ensure a productive outcome. Such situations may require a careful retooling of the skills of the administrative staff and the consultant may gently encourage certain managers to engage in educational and training opportunities.

In addition to skill deficits, managerial disinterest in classification is common. This is difficult to deal with and requires a two-pronged attack which can be based on either:

- 1) Instilling fear of the negative consequences of "disastrous" misclassification errors
- 2) Instilling an appreciation of the "benefits" of classification

These approaches to bring the policies and goals of classification into high focus. They build a "vision" of what jail classification aims to achieve and its critical roles in achieving a high performing jail in terms of the major correctional goals of a jail. Another way to motivate the disinterested manager is to demonstrate the "informing" role of classification for his job tasks. This emphasizes the ways that classification data helps the jail manager (e.g. monitoring, planning, estimating trends, managing the inmate population, making policy decisions, etc.). Valid data presented in an understandable manner may heighten a reluctant administrator's understanding of the link between classification and the policies and goals of the jail, and thus demonstrate its relevance to his work.

### **Building Competence Among Line Staff**

Competence at the line level is also critical. Several approaches are used in upgrading the competence of line staff in classification skills. As with the managerial staff, an assessment of the current skills and deficiencies is initially required. The following may be useful:

Training Sessions in Objective Classification: This is often a first step if new instruments, forms, new data entry procedures, new override procedures, and so forth, are being introduced as part of the new classification. Training line staff in the broader roles of classification and its linkage to various policy goals of the jail is also useful.

Broadening Skills and Flexibility Through Job Rotation: Staff skills and flexibility may be deepened through job rotation within the classification unit. Thus, each classification officer may learn the job skills of each position in the classification unit and perhaps in related jail departments (e.g. intake and booking, pre-trial assessments, security, etc). Such rotation procedures and their timing would, however, have to take into account the depth of skills, experience, training difficulties, staff preferences, and organizational needs of the overall facility.

Skill Development Through Job Enrichment and "Informing" Feedback: Classification jobs can be designed to augment formal training and to emphasize continuous learning on the job and professional growth. Jobs can be enriched (as previously mentioned) by providing feedback reports covering data trends, job performance levels, workloads, override rates, and other information to enhance learning and self-management tendencies. These reports can link classification to the bigger picture of jail policy performance and population dynamics. This must be done carefully so that the officer can experience job enrichment rather than coercive monitoring.

Educating Staff Through Involvement and Participation: Staff support and "buy-in" is enhanced by involving staff actively during implementation. A side effect of such participation is that staff become more aware of the meanings, implications, and roles of classification in a broad context. Participating in inter-departmental teams, assessing the classification design, providing feedback to management, and engaging in joint problem solving, all help to educate staff. The staff involved can then train others in the classification department.

Linking Reward Systems to Higher Skills and Standards of Job Performance: Although the actual use of the new classification is still in the future during the pre-implementation phase, the Transition Team can give thought to the process of linking skill development to the job appraisal system. When introducing new procedures it is sometimes useful to link rewards, promotions and pay to skills, job performance and specific standards. These criteria and standards must be explicitly connected to the new classification procedures. Policies of promotion, pay increases and a merit system based on new skills and fair assessment of performance levels will motivate correct use of new classification procedures and undermine resistance. Such benefits as promotion, pay increases and training opportunities must be earned rather than just stem from time served. The evaluative criteria must be perceived as fair and must cover all aspects of the job, and not just selected criteria. Creaming and CYA tactics usually occur if there is partial coverage of critical job performance criteria. This distorts job performance assessment and undermines the overall value of classification. The missing criteria will be ignored or undervalued by staff.

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## **Supervising to Enhance Commitment versus Compliance**

The design of a supervision and monitoring approach for the new classification brings the implementation team face-to-face with the conflict between "coercive management" vs. achieving self-responsibility, empowerment, and commitment among line staff. One supervision style aims to develop staff that are competent, professional, committed, have a "problem solving" style, and avoid passive aggressive tendencies. Organizational features which appear to produce this style include: flat non-hierarchical organizations, delegated autonomy for decision-making, and the earlier mentioned "informating" approach to supervision.

The contrasting "command-and-control" supervision style remains widespread in jails. Administrators, managers and line staff are well separated hierarchically. The typical jail manager makes pessimistic or negative assumptions about line staff motivation, skills and responsibilities, and adopts coercive monitoring based on tight supervision (Walton 1989). Such managers often make "worst case" assumptions about the job motivations and skills of line staff. Supervision and monitoring procedures are not aimed to educate and empower line staff but rather to prevent errors from occurring. In those jails where objective procedures have not yet been introduced, line officers become highly motivated to classify inmates conservatively to avoid all risk taking, and to emphasize "staying out of trouble". Thus, over-classification errors are rampant.

This style may create narrow, fragmented and de-skilled jobs, close supervision, precise standards of minimum performance, low autonomy and narrow responsibility. Classification work degenerates into routinized form-filling, data entry, and filing tasks. The negative consequences are that line staff often become resentful, bored, apathetic and alienated, and adopt a defensive work style. Workers aim to achieve only the minimum required levels. They are disinclined to take initiative in problem solving if this requires any "thinking" above or beyond minimum requirements. Ironically, this approach creates waste, inefficiency and many classification errors, with the result that line classification officers are chronically behind in their work, overloaded, and report high levels of burnout.

To avoid these negative consequences, managers must redesign jobs and create new supervision approaches to raise commitment and initiative among line staff (Drucker 1989; Walton 1989). Success shows when line staff adopt the following patterns: higher commitment, more initiative and problem solving orientation, avoiding, higher productivity, higher job satisfaction; and an interest in professional growth, higher quality in the system, and so on. Walton (1989) argues that these features are achieved by job design and supervision strategies that demonstrate an organization's commitment to quality of work life, and professionalism of line staff as described above. In jails which are introducing objective classification, the following tactics may provide a more productive environment for line work:

- Routine classification tasks are automated where possible.(e.g. data entry tasks, compilation of criminal histories, etc.)
- Discretionary and judgmental aspects of classification are upgraded in importance so that learning and growth are promoted. An example might be skill in identifying the need for upward and downward overrides.
- Non-coercive feedback on performance is given. Relevant information is shared with line workers using several feedback mechanisms on overall jail performance, unit performance, and individual line staff performance.
- Management should endeavor to provide regular training programs.
- Delegate more autonomy and decision-making to the line level: The approach is to create flatter organizations, weaker hierarchical boundaries, more autonomy and decision-making shared with line level staff. Thus, responsibility for classification decisions is shared between supervising managers and line staff. Line classification staff can engage in joint problem-solving in quality control issues, and given more opportunities to participate in unit decisions.
- More communication to line workers: In pre-implementation active communication and dialogue between line staff, mid-level managers and the implementation team should occur often. Jail managers should communicate external pressures on the jail to line workers, so that line staff have clearer appreciation of the link between their jobs and the larger context of jail goals, and overall planning and objectives. There should be dedicated efforts by managers to include staff in the information "loop" and increase participation and involvement.
- Career development planning for line staff: This issue is often overlooked by jail managers when implementing new procedures. Consideration should be given to whether the new classification procedures have implications for the career choices and plans of the classification staff. A need may exist for discussion between staff and management to reassure staff that their career plans are respected. This is often critical for older more senior staff who may be threatened by new methods. These communications are more effective in the pre-implementation phase before resistance has built up, and to help staff prepare for change.

### **III. DESIGNING, TESTING AND REFINING A NEW CLASSIFICATION**

A new classification system must be designed prior to implementation. In design, the concept of "alignment" is critical. Alignment deals with the consistency of the classification system with the structure, strategies, policies and goals of the jail. Jails have often chosen classification methods that are quite inconsistent with their goals. Many considerations influence the appropriateness of a new classification system for a particular jail. The Implementation Team must work with the consultant in considering the various costs, benefits, characteristics and appropriateness of different methods of classification, so that the classification system is aligned with the jail's needs.

A first design consideration is whether to modify the current classification method, or totally replace it with a new method. If a traditional subjective classification is used it will usually be totally replaced by an objective method. If an objective method is currently used - but is failing for certain reasons (sabotage, inappropriate or invalid risk factors, etc) - it is prudent to clarify the reasons for this failure. If bureaucratic, political or organizational reasons for failure are identified (e.g. resistance, sabotage, insufficient staffing, etc.) these are likely to undermine any new method. Organizational and political problems must be tackled prior to making changes in methods of classification.

Goals and policies come first. Management must explicitly spell out the goals that the classification is expected to achieve such as: Inmate and staff safety; efficient use of limited bed and staff resources; fairness and equity in the processing and management of inmates; etc. These provide a basis for assessing whether the classification method can actually achieve these goals. Classification goals are prioritized differently by various user groups (e.g. inmates, citizens, jail staff, inmate advocacy groups, special interest groups, MADD, law enforcement, etc.). No single classification design can hope to simultaneously optimize all goals, since these goals can be mutually contradictory. Efficiency, fairness, the right to appropriate treatment, least restrictive custody, and safety (of staff, inmates and public), are achieved to differing degrees by different classification designs. The staff who are designing - or selecting - a new system must be sufficiently aware of the nature of classification systems to avoid self-defeating" choices in this stage. A common example of a self-defeating choice is to select a "predictive classification method" when what is really wanted is logical, coherent processing of inmates (or vice versa).

#### **3.1 Consideration When Adopting an Existing Classification**

In some situations existing classification instruments may already be available. These instruments, with corresponding procedures, may have already demonstrated their effectiveness in meeting the identified goals. The advantages of adopting an existing proven system may include:

- a) It is often less time-consuming and costly.
- b) More emphasis can be placed on testing the classification for appropriateness

- in the new jail and making any necessary modifications or improvements.
- c) Adopting an existing system avoids having to "re-invent the wheel".
  - d) Such systems have been debugged and tested in real-life conditions in other jails.
  - e) Similar systems across regional or state jurisdictions will facilitate communication of offender information, inmate transfers, and consistency of data analysis over extended areas.

### **Aligning the Classification with User Experience, Skills and Needs**

The design of a jail classification system is invariably improved by securing input from various users of classification. If classification is designed mainly by technical data processing staff the following failures may occur:

- a) Failure to incorporate different stakeholder requirements or concerns (for data output, for reports, etc.).
- b) A tendency to overlook the time and effort needed to operate the system. There may be thoughtless imposition of additional tasks on over-burdened line or middle management staff. If a serious escalation of the workload occurs - when it is already so hurried - staff may become frustrated and may blame insensitive manager' for their heavy workload. They may sabotage, ignore, or resent the new system.

The implementation team should thus solicit input and evaluation from many user groups and avoid the mistake of having only technicians making all design decisions for the new system design.

Another alignment concern is the balance between line vs. management data reports. Currently, there is a shift in orientation of classification systems away from simple record keeping for line decisions (housing and treatment), to an emphasis on managerial data needs, policy decision data and assessment data on facility operations. The data produced by classification - instead of lying dormant and unused - is now being processed in ways that "informate" and educate management staff on jail performance, policy achievement, resource needs, resource utilization, trends and planning, performance appraisal, and so on. Thus, classification systems are being increasingly designed to meet administrative management and other policy-maker needs, in addition to line-staff needs.

Traditionally, classification emphasized line decisions and basic record keeping rather than managerial decision making. Classification was seen as a way to allocate housing and maintain inmate records. It was a limited purpose tool with little impact on other organizational issues and with minor importance for facility management or policy making. There was little value added uses for classification data. This modest role was consistent with a management

philosophy which often ignored classification, or delegated it to low level managers. Many jail managers complacently ignored it, or misread its potential relevance for broader strategic jail management.

The newer management approach to classification transcends this limited view of classification. This newer view is shown by classification system designs which are the hub of jail inmate processing decisions and when local management intensively uses data for both line and management purposes.<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with Drucker's (1989) idea of information-based organizations and his emphasis on "informating" staff at all organization levels. Classification systems are increasingly seen as central to the overall information, data analysis, and educational functions of the jail and local corrections systems.

### **3.2 Assessing User Friendliness and Staff Information Needs**

A pilot test should examine staff acceptance, the availability of required offender data, relevance of data reports, and ease of use, at both line and management levels. The design of the classification should be user friendly, efficient, consistent, relevant, and non-threatening. Feedback, review, and reciprocal communication between users and designers of the classification help to achieve these goals. Many classification systems in jails have been sabotaged and abandoned because of cumbersome inefficiency, staff training problems, a perceived lack of face validity and irrelevance of the system.

The testing process must include ALL the different users of classification (e.g. line classification officers, security officers, administrative policy and planning staff, community corrections staff, pre-trial release staff, courts, citizens groups, etc.). All should indicate what information they need from classification, and how the data should be presented so that it can improve the decisions they make, and when. This exercise improves communication; introduces more perspectives on design; reduces the likelihood of inappropriate designs; report formats or procedures. It may also help in reducing resistance, obtaining commitment and ensuring appropriate use of the system.

Another critical alignment challenge is to design classification output reports to meet the information needs of different users of the system. A careful analysis of the information needs of staff is a starting point. Knowledge of user information needs is the basis for designing output reports knowing the information needs of different users - throughout the jail - may minimize the problem of "mismatches" (i.e. when staff receive data they don't need, or, don't receive data they need).

Jails, across the country, and particularly in Michigan, are developing and refining "informating" indices and reports to assess many aspects of jail

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: Data Driving Policy and Planning Decisions "Policy Making in Criminal Justice: The Use of Hard Data at Each Stage of the Policy/Planning Process". Northpointe Institute, 1991.

operations and behaviors, as well as organizational goals (e.g. %'s of upward and downward overrides, %'s of inmates housed in incorrect security levels, eligibility for alternative management options, inmate programs, levels of safety, etc.). Valid numerical indicators of jail processes and policy goals are critically needed. These increase the functional value of classification for both line and management staff, help ensure its use, build political support, and lower resistance to the new classification. If users, both within the jail and local criminal justice system, find that a new classification system provides relevant, timely and valid data, they will be more inclined to use, and politically support, the new system.

Early design meetings for the new system should also seek user suggestions for new functions of the new system. Line staff and middle managers - in classification and other departments - may suggest innovative ways for using classification data. This flexibility will encourage continuous system modification, upgrades and extensions. Top management must allow freedom for such innovation. This is consistent with the goal of continuous learning by line and management staff and continuous improvement and application of the classification system.

### **3.3 Selecting Critical Data Elements for Classification**

If an existing proven, efficient, effective classification system is not adopted, selecting risk factors is a major step in designing a method of classification. The selection of risk factors depends almost totally on the purposes of the classification. Once purposes are specified (e.g. to minimize escape, to minimize danger to a community, to promote efficient use of limited bed and staff resources, etc.) risk factors that logically and validly relate to these purposes can be selected.

Criteria for evaluating risk factors: As the Implementation Team deliberates on risk factors, the following guidelines about potential risk factors must be considered:

- Is the risk factor predictively or logically valid?
- Is the risk factor reliable?
- Is the risk factor easily obtainable? or would it require exorbitant time and effort by staff?
- Is a risk factor redundant with other risk factors, so that it is "double counted"? (e.g. Several different indicators of "offense seriousness" are often collected)
- Is the risk factor legally appropriate? (Several factors have been disallowed by the courts in certain circumstances).
- Is a risk factor currently routinely collected? Will it require new questions or new forms?
- How much weight/priority will be applied to the various risk factors?

- Etc.

There is no universal set of risk factors appropriate for all classification systems and correctional goals. Different jails prioritize different goals. Thus different risk factors will be more or less appropriate for the classifications they design. There is significant advantage to achieving consensus on factors within regions or a state given the fact that all are generally governed by the same correctional, legal and criminal justice definitions and standards. This provides for consistency between jurisdictions with regard to inmate management, information sharing and data analysis between counties, local criminal justice systems, regions and the state. Thus, meaningful communication using common classification terms is enabled.

### **Some Mistakes in Choosing Risk Factors**

Several common mistakes may occur in selecting risk factors for jail classification. These include:

Lack of Precision/Ambiguity of wording: When risk factors remain ill-defined or ambiguous in their wording jail staff will interpret the meaning of the risk factor in different ways. Thus, error, inconsistencies and unreliability may enter the classification.

Including too many risk factors: When large numbers of risk factors are included a classification system may become unwieldy and inefficient. It may lose a clear focus on a particular risk, and users will be unaware of what specific risk is being assessed. When too many risk factors are included in a decision tree, the system may become unwieldy, with too many final branches.

Including risk factors that are impossible or difficult to obtain: Some risk factors are very difficult or impossible to obtain. Examples of this may include failure to appear in court histories or juvenile criminal histories (often legally sealed). This makes the work of a classification officer frustrating, time consuming, or impossible.

Lack of validity: When a risk factor has no obvious relation to the risk being assessed, the meaning and face validity of the classification are weakened. If a risk factor is totally irrelevant it simply creates needless extra work (and inefficiency) without enhancing performance and may detract from the classification goal.

Redundancy (double counting) certain factors: A common problem in jail classification is to include several measures of the same variable. For example, seriousness of current offence, is often double or triple counted by including separate risk factors for: bond level, length of sentence, and separate ratings of "seriousness" of current offence.

Inadequate verification: While it is hazardous to rely strictly on official records, because of missing data, it is equally hazardous to rely strictly on inmate self-report. Thus, verification procedures are important in many situations.

### **3.4 Designing the Classification or Decision Rule**

A second component in designing an objective classification involves the logical or mathematical procedure to combine risk factors to reach a decision. This integration of risk factors is the logic of the classification method. Several different logical methods may be used for classifications used in jails.

#### **1. Point Scales**

Point scales offer a simple technique to transform raw risk factors into a decision rule. Several approaches are used to summate separate risk factors into a single score to reach a decision. A major distinction is whether the approach is primarily logical or statistical. Logical methods summate selected risk factors through political or professional consensus. Statistical methods sometimes use procedures such as regression or discriminant analysis to create an additive scale. Statistical procedures are common in the research literature in criminology, but are not commonly used in facility settings. The common approaches include:

- Equally weighted additive point scales (logical/consensus)
- Differentially weighted point scales (logical/consensus)
- Point scales based on multiple regression (rarely used)
- Point scales based on discriminant analysis (rarely used)

Furthermore, different methods are used for selecting the critically important cutting points for a point scale. These range from statistical comparisons of high and low risk groups, to logical, and totally subjective or political approaches. Unfortunately, even the more objective methods are subject to political influences. Statistical methods include the use of probability calculations in discriminant analysis, criterion groups comparisons, and percentile graphs of the point scale against selected outcome criteria (e.g. jail infractions) to create percentile plots which guide the selection of cutting points. Any break or "elbow" in such curves might indicate appropriate cutting points.

## 2. Decision Trees

Several quite different approaches are also available in developing decision trees.

These include:

### a) Non-Statistical Decision-Trees

These try to map the logic of an expert decision maker, or expert classification officer, using the same variables as used by the classification staff. Trees may also be developed by consensus of a committee which tries to reach agreement on the critical variables and how they should be combined. Logical trees are becoming more common in jails (e.g. the Northpointe Inmate Classification Tree in Michigan and elsewhere which is currently used in several jails).

### b) Statistical Trees

Currently, there are several different statistical procedures to create trees and no consensus on which is best or whether they even improve over basic point scales. Several statistical methods for decision trees are discussed in the criminological research literature. These include: Predictive attribute analysis, automatic interaction detector, and association analysis. Although these have received a fair amount of attention in academic research, they have not been used much for actual jail decision trees for inmate classification. Thus, no conclusions are offered on the best statistical approach to developing decision trees in a real-life jail context.

The issues that must be faced in developing statistical decision trees:

- Splitting rules: What statistical rules should govern splits
- Stopping rules: At what point should a branch not be further subdivided or split
- Cross-validation: Statistically developed decision trees always require cross validation if they are to be used in a new jurisdiction or setting. This is crucial to statistically developed trees.

## 3. Subjective - Intuitive Combination of Data and Overrides

Purely subjective judgmental and/or intuitive methods of combining data to reach decisions has been the dominant style of classification in jails for decades. Such intuitive or professional judgement is also historically widespread for combining data into decisions by courts and probation, as well as jails.

Subjective decision making, unfortunately, has been shown to make more errors

of over classification than objective classification. Thus, it produces more restrictive classifications. Many studies have shown that objective methods are more accurate in reducing "false positive" errors than subjective classification (Monahan, 1982; Austin and Litsky 1983). This is understandable in terms of the psychological pressures on the subjective classifier (i.e. the classification officer) to avoid false negative risks. The pressure to avoid the false negative error will push most classification officers toward highly restrictive conservative styles of decision making. The guidance of an objective system helps mitigate the high rate of false positive errors.

#### 4. Point Scales versus Decision Trees

A major question is whether to use a point scale or a decision tree. No strong guidelines exist, at this time, regarding the relative merits of the two approaches. Users must evaluate several criteria, and remain sensitive to their own classification needs. Preferences among jail staff for either approach is often idiosyncratic. Some pertinent comparative criteria to be considered when evaluating these two approaches include:

Predictive accuracy: There is no advantage to either method in terms of accuracy of predictions. New research studies must investigate this issue.

Face Validity/High relevance: Decision trees are generally more face valid and intuitive than point scales. Thus, if staff resistance, staff training, and staff understanding of the classification are important, then a Decision Tree may be preferred.

Ease of Use: If the classification system is conducted manually, the decision tree is again preferred since it involves less arithmetic and is generally easier to use. However, if the system is computerized the arithmetic may become less cumbersome.

Clarity of Classification Categories: The decision tree assigns inmates to categories clearly defined by splits on the tree. This approach produces categories of high precision, and little ambiguity in the meaning of each category. The point scale, by contrast - especially if there are only three levels (e.g. max, med, and min) - produces categories that can be ambiguous (i.e. an inmate could obtain the points needed for the max, or medium categories, in several different ways). Thus, if clear categories and unambiguous definitions are important, the decision tree may be preferred.

Organizational Flexibility: Both methods can produce differing numbers of categories e.g. 3,4,5, 6 and so on. This choice depends on how many inmate categories a facility wishes to use and how to coordinate the number of categories with available bed space and program eligibility.

Both methods are flexible and can be tailored to meet the requirements of the particular facility.

Legal issues: Both methods appear to equally comply with the legal requirements of objective data, rational decision rules, clarity and logic.

### **3.5 Pilot Testing the Selected Classification Method**

The pilot test of the prototype method consists of several sequential steps. The goal is to provide a stringent test of the prototype and make refinements if needed. The sequential steps include:

- Finalizing new classification instruments and forms
- Drawing an appropriate inmate sample
- Collecting data on the inmate sample
- Data preparation and Statistical Analysis
- Adjustments and refinements to the instruments

a) Finalizing the new classification instruments and forms: In some instances the jail staff may wish to add certain locally important data elements to prototype forms. The consultant must ensure that the response formats for such new questions are precise so that they produce valid data, unambiguous meanings, and are appropriate for valid statistical analysis. The new forms must be reviewed and tested in "on-line" conditions before embarking on the actual pilot test. We strongly emphasize that adding questions to an existing validated instrument may alter the validity of the instrument. Additional decision elements should not be added frivolously or without careful consideration and testing of the impact of these additions on the classification outcomes.

b) Drawing an Appropriate Sample: Inmate samples may be drawn in several ways. Care should be given to the exact source of the sample, what it represents, and how it is drawn. To conduct statistical validation of the NIC Point System, or the Northpointe Decision Tree usually requires sample sizes of around inmates, although this could be relaxed in small jails. Larger samples are needed for Decision Trees because of the larger number of categories, and the necessity of having sufficient numbers of inmates in each cell of the tree for stable comparisons.

One approach to drawing a sample is to assess "who is in jail on a particular day". This requires specifying a particular day (or set of days), and then obtaining a complete listing of the jail inmate population on that day. Data Processing can usually provide listings of inmates on the day (or days) to be considered. Listing may reach several thousand for a

large jail. Care must be taken that the listings covers ALL the jail, without omission of certain buildings or segments of the inmate population (e.g. a separate minimum security farm, etc.).

Large jails usually require random selection of a sample from a much larger population. Most Data Processing Departments have the ability in their data base software to randomly select fractions of this population (e.g. 200-300 cases). Alternatively, a systematic selection can be used by taking a random start and then systematically selecting every case, for example. Both approaches will generally produce samples that are sufficiently representative of current jail residents.

Another approach focuses on a specific stage in processing inmates through a jail. For example, the sample could be obtained from "booking" on a particular day. This gives a different sample than that obtained by sampling "jail residents" on a particular day. Since many inmates are arrested, booked and released before being housed, care must be taken in specifying exactly what population is being sought. In different situations arrestees, bookings, or residents, may be more appropriate. For purposes of testing jail security classifications, it seems appropriate to sample residents who are actually booked into the jail.

c) Collecting the data: Collecting classification data on any substantial sample size (e.g. 200-400 inmates) is a fairly large undertaking and requires substantial time and effort.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the following are worth noting:

It is important to bring "top management" into the picture to obtain the necessary commitment of staff time. Depending on the state of jail records, and the availability of computerized data screens, the task of filling out new classification forms may vary from 10 to 30 minutes per inmate. Overtime may be required if staff are currently overwhelmed with routine work.

The supervising manager and/or consultant should supervise this process and develop a plan to systematically conduct the needed classifications on a daily basis. Data collection must be conducted systematically and quickly. Classification staff who conduct the assessments must have a daily target, and progress must be reviewed by the manager.

The supervising manager and/or consultant must check the accuracy and legibility of completed forms. The whole testing and validation effort depends on accurate data. This data collection is the foundation for the

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<sup>2</sup> These steps may be made significantly easier if adopting an existing valid system. This would be particularly true if the system had been demonstrated valid and effective within the new jails region or state.

pilot study. Sloppily collected data, incomplete forms, or data errors, will undermine the whole effort.

d) Data preparation: Data coding procedures must be appropriate so that statistical analysis can be validly conducted.<sup>3</sup>

A coding frame should be prepared: It is prudent to prepare a clear coding frame to describe how the data will be scored for computer analysis. The person conducting the statistical analysis should usually design this coding frame and give it to those responsible for data entry.

Data can often be directly entered into a personal computer data base or spreadsheet (Lotus 1-2-3, Excel, etc.), and then transferred into virtually any statistical analysis program (SPSS, Systat, etc.).

e) Data Analysis: The statistical analysis for validation is straightforward. Once the data is transferred into a statistical package several kinds of analysis are conducted to assess different aspects of the validity of the classification:

Frequency distributions on all relevant questions in the classification forms: This provides % breakdowns on all salient questions (e.g. demographics, criminal histories, etc.). This provides basic descriptive statistics on the inmate population, and selected categories.

Mean scores and distributions: For continuous variables (e.g. number of prior arrests, age, and so on. Again, this simply provides basic statistics for the inmate population, and selected categories.

Develop Point Scale Total: This arithmetic process summates the questions that comprise the point scale, to give a total points score for each inmate. For example, in the NIC prototype point scale this involves summing seven questions. It may be noted that the social stability questions (age, employment or school, and stability of residence) are negative points and are subtracted from the total of the other points.  
Percentile Plots for the Point Scale Total: This graphs the scores on a point scale (on the vertical axis) and provides percentiles (0 to 100%) on the horizontal axis. This indicates the exact percentages of inmates falling below various cutting points on the point scale, and is useful when selecting cutting points for a point scale.

Establish the percentages on inmates in max, med, min, and various

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

sub-levels if appropriate: For both decision trees and point scales an important analysis is to assess percentages of inmates falling into max, med, and min, and into various sub-levels if these are used.

Compare Objective Classification Security/Custody Levels against Custody Levels reached by current procedures: A useful analysis is to compare how the inmates are classified by the new objective method versus the current procedure. Most pilot tests classify the inmate sample using both new and old classification systems. This comparison is accomplished using a simple contingency table (cross tabulation) analysis. The cell percentages indicate the overlap between the two systems in classifying inmates. The marginal totals percentages of the contingency table indicate %'s of inmates classified into max, med, and min, in each system. The same procedure is used irrespective of whether the new system is a point scale or decision tree.

Examine concurrent validity of the new Classification: By selecting several external variables that were not used in constructing the point scale (e.g. past parole, juvenile record, institutional infractions, etc.) a series of contingency (cross classification) and correlational analyses are used to assess concurrent validity. These provide significance tests of the association or correlation (Chi-square, correlation coefficient, etc) between the new classification and important external validity variables. These indicate the degree of association between the new point scale total or tree, to each external validation variable. If these are significant, we conclude that the new scale has shown evidence of validity. Any significant correlation to other correctionally relevant external variable provides evidence of the concurrent validity for the new classification.

Establishing the relative importance of risk factors: It is useful to know whether the new classification is dominated by any specific risk factors. In many point scales, for example, seriousness of past offence or current arrest, dominate the classification decision. For point scales, this analysis is often accomplished using multiple regression with the overall point scale score as the dependent variable (Y) and all risk factors as independent variables (X's). The regression coefficients provide a reasonable assessment of the relative importance of the different risk factors. This is also accomplished by simply examining the correlation coefficient between each risk factor and the overall security points scale total. In decision trees, this assessment is accomplished by cross-classification of the final classification levels of the tree against each risk factor. The magnitude of the association coefficients (Chi-square, Cramer's V, etc.) indicate the relative contribution (without relying on significance tests).

Examining the extent and type of overrides: By cross classifying whether

an override is used vs. the levels reached by the prototype instrument alone, we identify the extent of overrides percentages in each level of max, med and min. The directions of overrides (i.e. upwards from min or med, into higher levels; or downwards from max and med, into lower levels), is clarified by this analysis. This helps in clarifying staff's override rates, tendencies and appropriateness and validity of the instrument.

### **3.6 Refining the Methods after the Pilot Test**

Following the pilot test there may be a need to modify the new objective system by making it more or less liberal or restrictive. This involves a consideration of the placement of cutting points for point scale systems, and examining each splitting process in trees, an examination of inmates percentages falling in each custody level, and finally an assessment of override percentages.

Cutting points - should they be changed? A major finding from a pilot test is the percentages of inmates falling into each custody level. If these deviate markedly from the levels that historically exist in the jail there will be major implications for housing re-arrangements, building plans, etc. At this point discussions must be conducted with Jail Administrators to develop plans to adapt to different %'s of inmates falling into different security levels. It is important to mention again that when changing from a largely subjective or political system to an objective system percentages of classification levels generally move downward toward lower classification levels.

If the percentage of inmates in maximum security exceeds 20% this is likely excessive for local jails and may demand careful scrutiny to assess which inmates truly deserve to be in maximum. The inmate percentages placed in maximum is often bloated for several reasons:

- Many upward overrides from medium, or even minimum,
- Cutting points were too restrictive
- High numbers of false positive errors

Should additional cutting points be added? In some jails there may be a desire for extra cutting points to make additional categories and differentiation between inmates. Some jails, for example, may wish to have two sub-categories of minimum, or two sub-categories of medium. When using point scales this requires additional cutting points within the minimum or medium categories.

The Northpointe Decision Tree system has 8 custody levels within 3 major security levels; 2 maximum security custody levels, 3 medium security custody levels, and 3 minimum security custody levels to facilitate more refined housing decisions if desired, program eligibility and more refined data analysis capabilities.

Numbers and types of Overrides: Using knowledge of rates of overrides (overall and upward/downwards) the consultant or classification manager should work with classification staff to review the appropriateness of each override.

When numerous upward overrides occur the staff may be viewing the new objective classification as too liberal. Conversely if downward overrides predominate, they are viewing the objective system as too conservative. With point systems, overrides often reach 30%-40% in the early stages of implementation. These override percentages must be monitored across time, and reviewed systematically by supervisors to assess their appropriateness and/or needed modification to the instrument. When the reasons have been established there may be justification for revising the objective system to make it more liberal or restrictive. If supervisory staff decide that the overrides are illegitimate, then additional training may be needed to alert staff to the reasoning behind their overrides. Overrides should generally fall within the 3% to 10% range if the instrument is adequately constructed and well developed. Experience has shown that point scales generally have higher override rates than decision trees.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION: INTRODUCING THE NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM INTO ROUTINE USE**

In this phase the new policies and procedures are put into place. The emphasis shifts from building commitment, political support and design, to the specifics of project management and monitoring. The overriding goal is to introduce the new procedures, and institutionalize them so that they are used and accepted as standard operating procedures. The pilot test is sometimes intertwined with this implementation phase since it is often the first step in introducing the new procedures to the working situation. However, during the pilot test the new classification procedures are still seen as "tentative and malleable". Experience has shown that it is well advised to conduct extensive pilot testing [Bowers and Bowers 1976] since new procedures are liable to be re-designed in important ways to increase their functionality and efficiency before being ready for routine use.

##### **4.1 Developing a Detailed Plan for Monitoring the Progress of Implementation**

A critical requirement of the implementation team, the "transition manager" and the consultant is to develop a detailed implementation plan. This can be done in PERT or Gant chart style and should lay out the major stages and sub-objectives, basic timelines, and who is responsible. Both the Implementation Team and the higher top management Steering Committee should understand the changes to be made, why they are important, who will do them and the sequence in which they take place.

When this plan has been completed (in detail) by the Implementation Team and the Consultant, it should be reviewed by Top Management who has the responsibility for an official "sign-off". In developing this plan the implementation team should try to identify what the biggest problems or obstacles are, and how these can be handled. Specific changes must be carefully timed, sequenced, and coordinated by the "transition manager". Without this plan there will be confusion and chaos. The plan is a road map to guide successive stages, tasks and should guide the content of various monitoring meetings with top management. The plan should also provide realistic estimates of resources (staffing, time-requirements, meetings, top manager input, etc.) required in the total implementation effort.

The above plan - with its timelines and responsibilities - monitors the progress of the implementation effort. Monitoring meetings should be set in advance between the implementation team and top management steering committee. These meetings provide a mechanism to assess implementation progress, to evaluate changes and adjust the timing of various goals if appropriate. The basic aim is to stay on top of the changes rather than letting needed changes slip through the cracks.

During the conversion phase, as the new system is being phased in, there may be a period in which there is duplication of classifications while the new system is phased in and the old phased out. This may allow minimal disruption of normal activities, since there will always be a backup on decisions made by the new system, and this can be used if the staff vigorously disagree with the new system. A subjective "override" of the new system also provides a safety valve for staff to refer difficult decisions to supervisors for additional review. The critical goal is to maintain reliable and consistent classification operations during the changeover period.

It is disadvantageous to maintain two classification systems for any long period of time. The transition manager together with the implementation team should terminate the old system as soon as the staff have become more comfortable with the decisions of the new system, and have developed skills in its use.

#### **4.2 Understanding the Dynamics of Organizational Change and Resistance**

As previously discussed, successful implementation must try to take account of the impact of the new classification policies and procedures on both line and management staff, as well as the power relations between different jail departments. Any change process is generally seen as having the following three phases:

##### **1. Letting Go of Old Procedures and Policies:**

In jails, numerous studies have found strong resistance to change. In large part, this resistance to change consists of a difficulty in letting go of the old procedures and policies. Staff with the highest expertise in the old system, who perhaps were responsible for developing it, who have the highest seniority and familiarity with it, and whose career identity is perhaps most intertwined with the older policies and procedures have the highest resistance. Among classification staff the loss of "discretion" with the use of logical/rational procedures may profoundly disrupt the sense of power which officers often experience when using more subjective traditional procedures. To let go of these old procedures transforms the identity of virtually unlimited discretion in classification decisions. There is difficulty in letting go of that identity. Management must foresee the impact of this disengagement and find ways to counteract its effects.

##### **2. A Neutral Zone Between Old and New Procedures:**

The next stage is a neutral zone, marked by a sense of oscillation between the old and new procedures, and a search for new patterns of beliefs; self-efficacy in one's work skills; and a new working identity. It is not only the line classification

officer who will confront such changes, but also jail management. For example, the newer objective classification systems produce much more objective statistical data which allows proactive planning, monitoring and new approaches to "managing by the numbers" which may be foreign to many jail managers more used to making snap decisions, and managing reactively. A transition to "informed management decisions" is just as profound for management, as are the transitions which occur at the line level. To optimize the usefulness of new classification systems both line and management staff must successfully negotiate these changes in a working identity. During this phase, it is critical for top management, the consultant, and the Transitional Manager to constantly affirm and justify the reasons for the change, and the positive goals of the new classification procedures.

### 3. Accepting the New Policies and Procedures

When staff finally accept the new policies and procedures, the implementation stage begins in earnest. Implementation and the new working identity can coalesce in accordance with a new sense of direction and priorities.

### **Impact of Objective Classification Procedures on a Jail**

The introduction of new information technologies virtually always has unexpected impacts on various aspects of the organizational structure and functions (Walton 1989). Unexpected changes may spread from the new technology to the organizational functioning. In managing the introduction of new classification systems, an issue is: "What are the likely impacts of the new methods on a jail?" Jail managers cannot naively assume that the new technology (by itself) will magically create the right kind of organizational structures to promote the new policy goals. Management must be vigilant in trying to understand the need for adjustments in organizational structures so that there is a good match between the technology and the organization. A passive, reactive stance - which appears to be the most common strategy in jails - may be hazardous and may allow resistance and sabotage to escalate dangerously before corrective interventions are made. The Implementation Team and the Transitional Manager must anticipate impacts, be aware of any signals of negative impacts, and introduce changes to the organization, or to the classification procedures and policies, to maintain alignment. The goals are to maintain line worker commitment, minimize resistance at both line and management levels, and introduce the needed levels of skill-building and training where necessary.

Initial assessments regarding the likely impact of the new objective classification methods on a jail may be made:

### **Impact on Line Staff**

- What is the initial impact on job pressure and workload?
- Has there been a loss of power, of autonomy, of discretion?
- Has there been any loss of control, or disciplinary power over inmates?
- As implementation proceeds, are staff showing positive motivation and Commitment, or a grudging unenthusiastic attitude to the new procedures?
- What has been the impact on overall competency levels?
- Has classification at the line level become "de-skilled", routinized, depersonalized or has the job become more professionalized and skilled?
- Have the new job requirements and new procedures produced boredom, frustration and lowered commitment to the overall goals of the jail?
- Has objective data been provided to line staff to motivate and educate them?
- Has a need arisen to redesign line work so that high motivation, high commitment and professionalism are more fully optimized; as opposed to a manipulative and destructive CYA attitude?

### **Impact on the Overall Organization of the Jail**

A new technology may have unsuspected influences on various aspects of the organizational functioning of the jail. As the new objective classification system begins to permeate the decision-making process of the jail (at both line and management levels) some answers to questions asked during the pre-implementation phase may emerge. The jail management and the implementation team may consider the following questions:

#### **How has Decision Making Authority Changed?**

When a well trained classification staff is given more powerful methods, this may create conditions where much authority and responsibility may move lower in the organization for several decisions. Management may re-consider what kinds of decisions can be delegated to line level officers. This may require different selection and training procedures, a high level of trust, and perhaps new review and supervision procedures.

#### **What Criteria Should be Used to Assess Staff Performance?**

Objective classification when combined with adequate data analysis can produce

new ways to assess the performance and work style of classification staff, and other users of classification. With objective classification the performance criteria are more visible. Management may design a monitoring and "feedback" system based on variables such as:

- Percentage of overrides
- Percentage of inmates classified in each security level
- Percentage inmates housed in ways that violate "least restrictive custody"
- Percentage of classification override decisions reversed by supervisors
- Average number of classifications per shift
- Number of classification reviews
- Number of classification reviews past due
- etc.

These and other indices may be built into the data system to provide monitoring and feedback procedures to staff.

#### Will the Monitoring System Promote Self Regulation and Commitment or Coercive Compliance?

Jails and other correctional institutions are notorious for creating a culture where staff adopt a "safety-first" mentality where staying out of trouble at a personal level is more important than the goals of the institution. A mentality of "going by the book" and CYA, even when patently destructive to the goals of the jail, may pervade the working style of most staff. The design of the monitoring and assessment systems are critical in either fostering this mentality or creating a new ethos where staff feel empowered, informed, educated and committed to the goals of the jail rather than being overwhelmed by needs for self-protection. Management can attempt to create a monitoring and feedback system that is used to "informate, educate and empower" rather than for achieving coercive compliance and CYA. Management teams must be very clear on the kind of supervision policy they desire. Any tendency to use a monitoring system for coercive compliance will usually undermine commitment, self-regulation and initiative. A new goal for many jails is to create informative monitoring procedures that promote in staff a disposition to support the goals of the institution, rather than the sabotage and destructiveness of coercive compliance.

#### How Will the New Classification Influence the Pattern of Information Flow in the Jail?

Objective classification systems produce far more data than traditional systems. This data (in whole or part) will be transmitted within the jail to parties needing the information, as well as to agencies outside the jail (courts, probation departments, local treatment programs, etc.). The implementation committee must give consideration to questions such as: "What information is needed by whom? when? who is not allowed to see this info?", etc. Objective data in a

computer and amenable for statistical analysis is much more accessible and manipulable. This raises issues of access, and appropriate channels for information flow.

#### Will Any Groups or Individuals Lose Power?

As mentioned in the pre-implementation phase, the introduction of new classification procedures may change the relative power of different individuals and units in the institution. Managers who actively learn how to use the new data, will gain in power, while those who rigidly rely on older approaches may lose power. If classification data becomes critical for top management planning, monitoring and policy decisions then the chief of the classification department, will gain in relative power. Access to, and control over critical information, virtually always enhances power of those who have this control. Skill in using the new procedures and it's data, will enhance power. Losers will be staff who are most identified with the old system, who show reluctance to let go of the old system, or who fail to learn the new system. Care must be taken with such staff to provide encouragement, reassurance that they will maintain seniority, and full access to new training.

#### Have any Staff Units or Jobs Become Obsolete? Are any New Positions Required?

When implementing the new system the Implementation Team must keenly assess whether any existing functions in the jail become obsolete because of the new procedures. When computerized classification is introduced there may be such gains in efficiency that certain staff positions may become redundant. A second question is whether the new procedures create a need for a new position or new functions. For example, objective classification may create a need for additional classification staff to support the enhanced functions of the on-going classification process. This may for example include a "data analyst" to prepare and analyze data in a form accessible to top managers for planning and policy work. These positions are seldom budgeted in a traditional classification unit. A related question is "what type of work in the classification unit can be automated?".

#### Are New Skill Levels Needed at Various Hierarchical Levels?

When the new classification procedures are actually in use, a common finding is that there are skill deficiencies in using the procedures throughout the organization. Skill deficiencies at the line level are solved easily through training procedures on the new classification methods. A much more difficult problem emerges when top jail managers are technologically or numerically unsophisticated. Many of the benefits of objective classification hinge on management's ability to understand and use the data produced by the system. An objective classification - integrated with a Management Information System - allows research, policy and monitoring capacities to be greatly extended. Many top managers of jails are unable to cope with quantitative data since their training and preparation often lags behind the new capacities of the joint

MIS/Classification. Thus, they fail to capitalize on improved data in many management applications. This potentially valuable data remains unused and the benefits of the new system unrealized.

A related problem is that data analysis and research is often misunderstood, undervalued, and underused by jail administrators and other local key personnel.<sup>4</sup> Statistics and research are seen as a low priority by many correctional administrators. Consequently, many correctional organizations have little or nothing designated in their budgets for data analysis and research. Yet, in most private sector businesses, a substantial budget segment is earmarked for research (Shoech, 1982). Top managers of jails must make more strategic use of the data collected by their organizations. More attention must be given to management skill development when introducing new information technologies into jails.

#### **4.3 Building Competence During Implementation**

During the implementation phase, the skills development efforts initiated in the pre-implementation phase must be continued and intensified where needed. Training, and skill building at both line and management levels, and capacity building (to enhance the ability to maximize the full potential of the new classification system) remain high priorities. The following practices and strategies may become important in particular jails during the implementation phase:

##### **Identifying Skill Requirements and Capability Curves**

Initially, skill gaps may exist. Staff may conduct the new classification procedures relatively slowly, and may experience some difficulty using the new techniques. Thus staff capacity may initially be low, but will usually progressively rise as staff master the new techniques. Conversely, the time and effort requirements of the new system are high initially, but gradually fall over time. The Implementation Committee must manage a likely skills gap in the initial phases of implementation and a potential skills surplus in the later stages when the methods have been mastered.

Often, the learning curve may be totally underestimated, and the emergence of a "skills surplus" and its attendant problems unexpected. A "skill gap" in the early phases of implementation is normal and should be anticipated, and contingency plans made for coping with it during this early period. A large gap in skills at this phase can be overwhelming, and if not managed appropriately, through staff training and support, may cause serious harm to the commitment and morale of the staff.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The cross-over point, where skills and system requirements are in balance, depends on several factors. These two curves produce the usual "bow-tie" shape, where the left gap between the curves indicates a skill deficiency, and the right gap indicates a skills surplus.

### **Managing the "Skills Gap" During Implementation**

Where a skills gap or work overload among classification staff are identified, several strategies are possible.

Strengthening Current Capacities: Several tactics involve bolstering the capacity of the organization (e.g. by adding to the current staff, by instituting additional training, by allowing trained operators to work overtime, by using outside consultants to work with top management to learn to design and understand management uses of classification, etc.).

Reducing Current Demands: Another tactic is to identify the most time-consuming aspects of the new procedures (e.g. data verification) and temporarily reduce specific demands (e.g. for complete verification, or allowing relief from other performance pressures or duties). Other tactics involve a phased introduction - in which only certain new procedures are introduced while others are delayed. This might allow mastery over the new procedures to be built up sequentially. Thus, the jail might add the new procedures in stages.

### **Managing a "Skills Surplus" at the Later Stages of Implementation**

As noted above, as staff skills increase over time, and as the demands of the new system are systematically reduced, staff may eventually find that the job becomes too easy, and a "skills surplus" emerges. This can become a critical issue in terms of staff morale, career development, and motivation. Stagnation, boredom, disinterest, inattention and carelessness may emerge. This is particularly a danger when computerized and routinized classification procedures are available, and staff - if so inclined - can passively allow the new procedures to automatically reach decisions. Management must be alert to the emergence of this pattern and be prepared to introduce procedures to maintain growth, challenge and job enrichment.

A skills surplus, at either management or line level, provides an opportunity for continuing the development of the system, for additional training in other aspects of classification (e.g. suicide risk assessment, interviewing skills, enhanced internal and external applications, or the statistics of risk assessment). A good strategy is to gradually enhance the challenges of the system by developing additional reporting capacities, and by enriching other aspects of classification work (e.g. interviewing and data collection aspects) or by linking classification explicitly to the main correctional goals of the jail and the local

criminal justice system and providing feedback reports to the classification officers.

Staff skills are initially low and gradually rise; while "demand levels" of the new system slowly fall as staff becomes familiar with it.

Any enhancements to the skill levels of staff, to the efficiency of the classification data retrieval system, to data entry procedures, and so on, will shorten the time to the cross over point. Factors such as staff turnover, staff resistance, inadequate documentation, and so forth, will lengthen the time during which a skills gap exists.

### **Identifying Problems in Mastery/Competence**

Continual monitoring of staff performance and difficulties is a priority in the early phases of implementation. The Transitional Manager and the Classification Unit Manager must monitor whether any staff members are experiencing overload in terms of amount of work, excessive difficulty in using the new methods, or are not receiving the necessary cooperation from other units regarding data access, communication, etc. Although the Transition Team, has attempted to estimate workload levels and provide training, there is always the possibility of underestimating the actual workload. Any staff having such difficulties must receive extra help or additional training. A common deficiency may emerge from inadequate equipment or office space. For example, there can be a problem if there is an insufficient number of data entry terminals or lack of sufficient or appropriate space to adequately conduct the classification process. These may create "bottlenecks" in terms of data entry or retrieval, or an inability to conduct the necessary inmate interviews, and may disrupt the timely flow of information.

Additionally, if top managers show reluctance or inability to use the new data, it may be appropriate to provide training in the use of classification data for various planning, monitoring and policy decision making.

### **Providing Adequate Documentation**

During the implementation phase the Transition Manager and his/her committee, must remain alert to any weaknesses in documentation of the new procedures. A common weakness in many government agencies is the absence of clear documentation. This will hinder the learning curve of new employees and frustrate the transfer or explanation of the new techniques to other agencies. Administrators in jails often fail to provide financial and staff resources to support proper documentation. This may stem from top managers underestimating the value of documentation, or from an absence of staff with appropriate writing skills in developing policies and procedures. Yet, adequate documentation is an important requirement during implementation of new

classification procedures, and sloppy documentation may create problems later during this phase. Some justification for documentation include:

- Maintaining clear expectations and responsibilities of all concerned
- Documented data for court and liability issues
- Documentation of policy and procedure provides a basis for monitoring and evaluation.

### **Providing Jail-Wide Training - Development of Local Expertise**

Every jail must provide systematic training for all users of the new classification. This should not only focus on the staff in the classification unit, but also on all other staff in the jail who rely on classification or its data, to make certain decisions. They must have a profound understanding of the way in which classification levels and data informs and supports the decisions they make (e.g. **Internally**: housing decisions, in-house program eligibility, etc.; **Externally**: courts, community programming referrals, probation, etc.). Training programs range from highly structured, vendor sponsored, off-site courses to informal peer training among the staff in the classification unit. Many jails may be unable to afford an in-house training department, and may rely on one or two well-trained officers who have emerged as "local experts."

Most classification units have at least one highly motivated officer who develops high technical skills in classification. This officer may become a "de facto" expert and, in addition to training other officers, may introduce improvements in the basic classification system (e.g. new software sub-routines, new management reports, or additional procedures that are integrated into the current data base management software). Such officers usually emerge naturally as local trainers and informal technical consultants to local management. This local "expert" is usually motivated by an intrinsic interest in the subject of inmate classification, or in the software aspects of this job, by the appreciation and support of colleagues, and potential career advancement. This type of interaction helps to build cohesion and reciprocity both within the classification unit, and between units when help is given to other departments or agencies.

The local expert may also emerge as the person who writes the documentation or who prepares the written policy and procedures manual. Top management should allow adequate time to document the new procedures. This local expert eventually may be reclassified to a higher level technical job. His/her role may be formalized in a job description which emphasizes the more technical aspects of classification work (e.g. system modification, preparation of data analysis reports, and entered as an official job description in the classification unit). When this role is left at the informal level, and the extra roles and pressures

remain unrecognized, there may eventually be too much pressure on this person, and they may burnout, due to the widening of job demands with little support or reward.

#### **4.4 Maintaining Staff Commitment During Implementation**

During implementation it is critical to pay close attention to the morale and commitment of both management and line staff to the overall changes in policy and procedures. Such personnel problems are often ignored by the more technically orientated managers. They make the false assumption that if the technical issues are correctly addressed any personnel problems will quickly fall into place. However, great care and attention must be given to organizational and human impacts of the new procedures. The goal is to maintain the morale and commitment of staff, and to prevent the development of resistance and sabotage. Although line staff and mid-level managers may have "bought into" the new classification procedures in the pre-implementation phase; the true test of their commitment occurs when they incorporate the new procedures into daily jail practice.

##### **Threats to "Ownership and Buy-In" at Line Level**

In reviewing experiences in jails where new classification systems have been implemented many different issues have been identified which tend to undermine the "buy-in" of line staff. All of these should be monitored by the Implementation Team. The following personnel problems may be noted:

- A feeling that the change has been "imposed" from the top without sufficient input or consultation.
- Isolation from the justifications and rationale for the new changes, failure of management to fully explain the rationale.
- Inadequate communication from management on progress, and successes of the new system.
- Feelings that top management is disinterested or apathetic about this project.
- Job changes that produce isolation and which reduce contact and communication with others.
- Job changes that produce overload.
- Job changes that impoverish the job through excessive routine, automation, and boredom.

- No mechanisms for line staff to suggest design improvements, efficiency improvements, etc.
- No incentives or rewards for correct use of the new procedures (old methods of assessment, job appraisal and reward systems remain unchanged).
- Feelings that the new classification system does not have adequate validity.

All of these problems are discussed below. To some extent they correlate with skill building since, when strong new skills and professional growth are emerging, there is usually a concurrent increase in commitment.

### **Maintaining Line Staff Support and Ownership: Tactics**

The following tactics may become relevant in certain jails during the process of implementation. Many of these represent a continuation of procedures already initiated during the pre-implementation phase, and may be continued with little change in emphasis.

Providing Continuing Justification for the Changes: Line staff need continual reminders of the rationale for the new policies and procedures, and of the "vision" of desired outcomes. Many have a tendency to forget these justifications, and must be constantly reminded of the reasons why improved classification is important. Top management are critical in promoting this "vision" and of underlining the importance of the project.

Users Should Share Responsibility/Participation for Development: As mentioned in the pre-implementation phase, users at the line and middle management level must have continuing involvement, feedback and sense of participation. Resistance and sabotage among line staff are well documented as causing failure of new classification systems (Bohnstedt and Geiser 1979), and are likely if staff feel that their judgement and autonomy has been diminished or ignored. Conversely, commitment is strengthened when staff feel that they have participated in designing and shaping the new system. Thus, it is critical during this phase to involve personnel as much as is feasible, for example, by forming sub-project teams to deal with specific tasks, or to develop and encourage lines of communication to assist in assessing how the new procedures are operating, to find ways of increasing efficiency, and so on. Feedback from line staff and middle management on ideas for developing formats and content of reports, performance criteria, new indicators of policy or procedures, or even further development of new applications, can be highly productive.

As noted elsewhere, an emphasis on technical issues and the exclusion of users may produce a system that is technically sophisticated, but impractical at the

line level. Technicians (i.e. data systems staff and programmers) often speak a different language from managers and line users, and may have quite different criteria for evaluating the excellence of a new classification system. The dominance of technical consultants to the exclusion of users has produced some failures in the area of jail classification systems (e.g. when expensive and technically-sophisticated (but unusable) systems have been imposed on a jail). Thus, the implementation team and transition manager must ensure a balance between different personnel (managers, line and technical staff) who provide input during implementation.

### **Maintaining Trust and Cooperation Through Communication**

The implementation team can maintain trust through open and frequent communication with both line staff and top management, through periodic progress reports, memos, announcements of milestones achieved, etc., and by discussing these in staff meetings. Line staff and middle managers should be encouraged to raise any questions, concerns, or suggestions, during these progress meetings.

### **Job Enrichment vs. Impoverishment**

As noted earlier, the introduction of new procedures may have unexpected impacts on certain jobs. Management must be highly alert to certain jobs becoming impoverished, overly routinized, or over-demanding. Honest feedback from staff is important in checking on these tendencies. Staff are sometimes reluctant to report such problems, and should be encouraged in a non-threatening way to evaluate the new jobs created by the new procedures. Indicators of role expansion or contraction, increases or decreases in skill demands, and changes in communication patterns within each classification function are relevant in this context.

An example of role reduction and isolation was shown in one large eastern jail. Where objective classification was introduced, it focussed almost completely on information processing through paper files, and computerized record searches. The results were then given to security staff for implementation. The classification staff lost all contact with inmates, they lost contact with security staff, and there was a dramatic constriction of their communication network. Morale slowly disintegrated, a sense of meaninglessness occurred and a feeling emerged that classification was simply a "paper process". Thus, tasks must be carefully designed so that jobs are not impoverished either in "people-contact" or in level of challenge.

### **Encouragement and Support from Management and Others**

A common failing of top managers is to delegate implementation to mid-level managers and then pay virtually no attention to the process. This communicates

"disinterest" which is picked up by both the line staff and other managers. Regular attendance of top managers at meetings and frequent feedback on progress, as well as reminders of the "rationale and vision" are helpful in maintaining the morale of staff.

A useful tactic is to introduce line officers or managers from other jails who have recently incorporated objective classification systems, and who have successfully completed the problems of implementation and change. These personnel can recount how they solved specific problems and indicate the advantages which have accrued from the new system. It is important that such officers have high credibility, are relatively experienced, and can vouch for the success of the new system.

### **Creating Incentives for Correct Use of the New Procedures: Adjusting the Reward System**

Informal ways of rewarding compliance and cooperation (e.g. praise, public recognition at meetings, etc.) may be complemented by formal adjustments to the job appraisal systems. This introduces an explicit change to the incentive and merit system for staff. Productivity and performance data - based on the new classification procedures - may be introduced into the incentive system. Staff must feel that the new ratings fully reflect the work involved in the new procedures. A good approach is to solicit suggestions from staff, or possibly union representatives, regarding changes to the accountability procedures. **A failure to adjust the reward or recognition system to emphasize new goals may fail to motivate staff to make any changes in their procedures and they may proceed with "business as usual" and ignore the new system.** This has happened in many jails when an unpopular or inefficient new classification has been introduced (Bohnstedt and Geiser 1979).

Performance appraisal for a new system was discussed earlier under the general topic of skills development. During the implementation phase this will become routinized and the Implementation Team will be confronted with the success or failure of their attempts to emphasize the educational theme, rather than coercive compliance. Discussions with line staff concurrently with such feedback data will help in assessing which of these two themes is dominant. From a motivational and commitment perspective, it is critical that performance appraisal is perceived in its "informating and educational" role. Obviously, the goals are to promote both commitment to the jail, skills building, empowerment and responsibility on the part of staff, rather than compliance, coercion, or CYA tendencies. To achieve these positive outcomes it is critical that this data is primarily used for "informating and self-management" rather than for monitoring compliance.

Periodic reviews of the performance appraisal system, the indices used, how it is conducted, and how the information is provided to staff, are all critical in

pinpointing whether any aspects are threatening to staff, or are seen as unfair.

Any indicators of resentment, frustration, sense of unfairness regarding performance assessments, sabotage or other manipulation must be noted. Many different indices may be developed to provide feedback to staff on their classification work. For example:

- Percentage of correct vs. incorrect classifications
- Percentage of over classified
- Percentage of overrides
- Percentage of overrides disallowed by the supervisor
- Percentage of grievances by inmates and transfers
- Number of classifications done day/week/month
- Frequency of classification reviews
- Etc.

### **Provide Evidence of Improved Goal/Policy Performance**

The accuracy and validity of classification decisions may ramify throughout the jail, and may have profound influence on diverse policies (public safety, staff safety, discipline and order in the jail, overcrowding, inmate misconducts, etc.). Since the work of the classification unit is seen as contributing to these policy goals, an information feedback system to apprise staff (as well as higher management) on levels of goal attainment may motivate staff and enhance their commitment to excellence. Morale and commitment can also be bolstered if staff are included in the information channels regarding the degree to which agency goals and policies are being achieved. This is also part of the "informing and educational" process stressed by Drucker (1989). Walton (1989) has noted that in most institutional implementation efforts early payoff or visible demonstration of improved results is highly motivating to staff as well as managers.

### **Maintaining Top Administrator Support**

During implementation, the visible commitment of top administrators is again critical for maintaining line level support. If top administrators lose commitment to the new classification system, they can do far more damage than any line worker. Strategically- placed managers can block progress, minimize use, starve the project of funding, and spread an attitude of sabotage more profoundly than less strategically placed staff. Some approaches for working with administrative staff include the following:

a) Providing Feedback and Status Reports on Progress: Regular meetings to keep key administrators fully informed on progress are critical. Their membership on the Steering Committee should ensure their attendance at these meetings. On-

going reports, during the implementation process, by the Transition Manager should be provided directly to key administrators.

b) Solicit Their Input and Involvement: When certain political issues, policy conflicts, resistance problems, and so forth, occur, the Transition Manager and the Implementation Team can ask for their advice. It makes sense to involve them in issues in which their authority may be helpful. They may also become involved in specific activities that concern their areas of responsibility. Since classification ramifies into virtually all policy goals of a jail, this latter tactic should be effective in making the administrator aware of the link between classification and various policy issues.

c) Make Their Involvement Visible and Routine: Political support is critical during the implementation phase, thus it is important to make leadership visible. Administrative leaders should attend periodic meetings with line staff, they should sign-off on various project plans and decisions of the Implementation Team. Their actions, attendance, and questions during meetings should all indicate to staff that they support the change. The Transitional Manager should frequently let them know how important they are to the success of the implementation effort.

d) Remind Them of the Vision and Payoffs of the Project: The Transition Manager and consultant should repeatedly remind key administrators of the benefits of the new classification, and the desired outcomes. Top administrators, themselves, should be asked to present overviews of these payoffs to line staff, courts, citizens' advisory groups, and other stakeholders including county commissioners, planners, etc. In this way they will internalize the justifications, vision and payoffs of the new system.

#### **4.5 Maintaining Alignment Between the New Classification System and Jail Organizational Structure and Procedures**

Most alignment decisions will already have been made in the earlier design phase. However, design modifications and organizational adjustments may occur during the implementation phase. The Implementation Team must remain keenly aware of the need for maintaining good alignment between classification design and organizational structures and goals. Alignment considerations always focus on whether the classification as designed, can achieve the goals of the jail. A first critical component of this match is to identify user requirements during the pre-implementation phase. In the implementation phase, the task is to ensure that any adjustments made to the classification design remain consistent with organizational processes and policy goals.

#### **Ensuring That the Technical Design of Classification and Organizational Design of the Jail Consistently Support Each Other**

Walton (1989) has noted that when any major information technology is

introduced organizational change is inevitable. New ways of communication, changes in power, new coalitions, new incentive and monitoring systems, etc., may all occur as a result of new data, the speed at which it is available, and new ways of analyzing information. As the new objective classification system becomes routinized, there will be various concurrent organizational changes in the jail. Walton's major point is that there will always be adverse effects if this new technology is implemented without careful coordination with the organizational changes that also occur.

The transition team may anticipate that certain organizational habits may persist even when they are at odds with new goals. For example, many jail managers may ignore or fail to emphasize the expanded goals for classification. If certain managers have never used objective data for management purposes and prefer an intuitive "snap judgment" style, they may resent the new data, fail to appreciate its value, and ignore it. By holding to the old view that classification is just a line level technique to allocate housing, they will undermine the management and strategic uses of classification and undermine the full potential of the new classification system. Thus, the expectations and vision of managers must become aligned with the technical capacities of the classification unit. **A narrow view must give way to a broader vision.**

### **Designing Organizational Procedures and Policies to Ensure System Use**

Correct and efficient use may never happen if left to voluntary cooperation of the line staff. If line staff's working habits are independent and autonomous, if supervision is weak, and if performance criteria are vague or missing, a misalignment may exist between the new system and current organizational procedures. Alignment between organizational processes and the new classification system is shown when a jail re-designs its incentive and appraisal system to ensure that the new classification procedures are used correctly. Thus, new supervision and job appraisal procedures may be needed to ensure correct use of the new system. Clear and comprehensive classification policy and procedures are needed to provide the base for management's expectations of staff regarding classification performance.

Misalignment is also shown when organizational goals are adopted but not measured. Although the transition team and top managers usually identify specific goals for the classification system, they must take the next step and develop a monitoring system to assess these goals. Without such measurement there is no way that managers can know whether jail goals are being reached. Monitoring systems are also needed if management has adopted the strategy of achieving skills building through data feedback to line staff. Information feedback systems and reports must be broadly informative to serve the purpose of providing an in-depth review of classification processes and outcomes that is useful and relevant to line level staff.

## V. THE POST-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The main tasks of the post-implementation phase is to continue to refine and improve the classification system and to assess its effectiveness. These tasks are often ignored. Many jail managers make the assumption that the benefits of the new classification system will occur naturally. Studies of implementation have shown that this assumption is rarely true (Johnson and Friedlan, 1986).

Managers often assume that once the new classification system has been implemented and in place it can be ignored, and that it has reached an optimal level of performance. This approach often leaves the system inflexible and rigid. A more responsible approach following implementation is to create procedures for continuous evaluation monitoring and to assure progressive improvement in staff skills, procedures, and applications. This requires an ability to pinpoint weaknesses, and speedily introduce needed improvements. The following might be considered:

- Ensuring systematic staff training programs: this might include OJT rotation and multiple skilling of classification staff.
- Introducing quality assurance and problem solving groups of staff and/or the Implementation Team to regularly identify, discuss and correct any new problems that emerge.
- Creating explicit opportunities for enhancement of the system. Management should solicit feedback on weaknesses, problems, new indices, policy indicators, and creative uses of the system to extend its usefulness.
- Continuous performance monitoring using objective data with regular feedback reports to staff and quality assurance meetings to discuss this data.
- Introduce mechanisms to solicit any complaints or weaknesses reported by the more extended user group (courts, community corrections, community and program/treatment referral staff, etc.).
- Such changes to ensure continuous organizational learning and capacity building, if designed in a non-threatening and empowering manner, should help build expertise among classification staff, other stakeholders who use classification, and lead to continuous improvement.

## 5.1 **Maintaining Commitment: Working with "Resistance"**

Resistance may also occur or emerge in the post-implementation phase. As noted earlier policy or procedural changes may create stress, resentment, or resistance. Thus, it is prudent to maintain a vigilant attitude to the emergence of new people problems. A new objective classification system, as it becomes institutionalized may slowly impact morale, power structure and agency communication patterns. The strategies outlined in the previous implementation phase can be continued in the post-implementation period.

### **Political Impact and Resistance:**

It is during the post-implementation phase that the political impact and power shifting aspects of the new classification are liable to become more visibly linked to certain conflicts. Jails, like most large organizations often have several factions with competing interests. The implementation of the new objective classification system may have different impact on these factions and may become embroiled in their political conflict. The implementation team must try to be aware of any power shifts related to the new procedures. Some shifts that might be anticipated include the following:

- The more sophisticated units and staff gain power at the expense of the less sophisticated groups.
- Those who have more control over data tend to gain power at the expense of those who do not.
- Technically educated staff gain power over those who remain technically incompetent.
- Where data leapfrogs over lower level managers to top managers, then the top managers gain power relative to middle managers.
- Data is more politically powerful when collected for policy and administrative purposes (e.g., monitoring, planning, management decision making, etc.).
- Departments or units who collect and have access to policy data have increased power versus those who are outside of this data collection and analysis communication pattern. (Both internal and external to the jail.)

Various strategies to maintain political support, staff commitment, and neutralize resistance were mentioned earlier. These should be continued and augmented by the following:

1. **Establishing and Clearly Communicating Objectives:** Trust is maintained when

goals are clearly communicated and there are mutual feelings and no "hidden agendas". This is particularly important in the case of those staff who may lose some power or autonomy as a result of the new classification procedures.

2. Maintaining Participation: This remains important in all phases of implementation. Higher involvement will usually demystify the new procedures, maintain communication, and maintain trust.

3. Maintain the Involvement of Top Management: As noted earlier the continuing political support and involvement of top management helps in overcoming resistance.

4. Conditioning employees to believe that policy and procedural change is a normal part of any organization's development.

As mentioned in the pre-implementation phase, a discussion of the organizational impact of the new classification system on the jail will help identify and plan for any people problems that arise.

## **5.2 Evaluation and Monitoring**

Evaluation aims to identify any needed refinements, adjustments and also to demonstrate whether the implementation process remained true to the original design of the classification system. The identification of any problems or flaws in the classification system will protect line staff and management from being stuck with an inappropriate system. This, in turn, will protect against resistance and may identify potential areas of improvement. Goals of evaluation and monitoring during post-implementation, include the following:

### **Questions Regarding Classification Design**

- Can "ease of use" be improved?
- Can the selection of risk factors be improved?
- Can the efficiency of the system be improved?
- How accurate, reliable and accessible is the data that is used?
- What can be done to improve data quality and eliminate errors?
- Does the system provide evidence of predictive validity?
- Are any refinements, adjustments, needed to improve validity?
- Does the system comply with the logical, objective and rational requirements of the courts and other standard setting groups (ACA, etc.)?
- Does the system have adequate documentation?
- How easy is it to train new staff in these procedures and is the current training adequate?
- Is the system transportable to other jails?

### **Questions Regarding the "Practical Use" of the System**

- Are most line staff decisions about inmate processing being driven by the new system?
- Are line staff happy with the new system or apathetic, resistant, and antagonistic?
- Is there any evidence of sabotage and resistance at the line or mid-management level?
- Have staff developed a feeling of ownership, motivation, and has morale increased or decreased since the introduction of the new classification?
- Has the new system had an educational impact?
- Has mastery of the new techniques been achieved?
- Have classification personnel developed a better understanding of the broader importance of classification?
- Has there been any increase in initiative and personal responsibility (for doing the job with excellence) versus a "CYA" style of working?
- Is further training of staff needed to enhance the goals of the system?

### **Is the System Being Used by Managers?**

- Are managers using the full potential of the system, or are they essentially ignoring the data produced by classification?
- Is the classification system and its data being utilized by other stakeholders (e.g. courts, community corrections, planners, programs, etc.)? If not, who is ignoring it, and why?
- Do top management and various levels of management need to become more specialized and expert in order to make use of the new classification data?

### **Questions Regarding Organizational Impact**

- Is decision-making more centralized or do the staff feel that most decisions are made by higher level managers?
- What changes have occurred in communication patterns?
- Have line classification jobs been deskilled, stripped of meaning or enriched?
- What has happened to the time required to conduct a classification? Are there any gains in efficiency?
- Is more control being exercised from the top, from middle managers, or from the classification unit?
- Do any classification jobs need to be combined? fragmented? or extended in responsibility?
- Are any new jobs needed (i.e. new tasks that may have been over looked during the design phase of the classification)?

- Can these jobs be addressed by a redistribution of some existing positions due to the new procedures of the classification system?

### **5.3 Process Evaluation of the Operations of Classification**

Process evaluation assesses whether a new classification system has been successfully implemented, or whether resistance, sabotage, poor planning, and so on, have occurred.

It intensively examines many facets of the operation of the new classification system, including: procedures of classification, methods, the implementation process, staff training, and the integrity of use. It is often political, involving an examination of support which classification is receiving, and whether any parties are violating current policy and procedures. It requires interviews with all key personnel: line staff, mid-level supervisors, top administrative staff, inmates, and other justice officials using the classification system or its data, or who are impacted by it (e.g. police, judges, pre-trial or program staff, probation, etc.).

Analyzing Classification Documents: Useful information about the manner of implementation and use can be obtained from an analysis of jail documents (e.g. policy and procedures manuals, forms, department records, minutes of meetings where classification is discussed, etc.). These documents indicate whether a systematic approach was taken during implementation and may reveal unresolved problems.

Obtaining Data on Classification from Outside Agencies: Useful opinions and evaluations of the classification procedures can be obtained from personnel in other criminal justice agencies who are impacted by jail classification. Judges, probation department, pre-trial release staff, mental health, etc., may be interviewed to assess how they view the jail classification system, and how it helps, hinders, or is seen as irrelevant to their work.

Insights into the operation of the classification system during routine operations may also be obtained by probing the attitudes of local courts and inmates to the new classification system. Inmates, lawyers, and courts, are frequently engaged in evaluating jail classifications. The lawsuits against jails often directly criticize classification procedures for failure to comply with various legal standards. An examination of any requirements of the courts may be helpful in evaluating the jail's new classification system.

Inmates attitudes may be helpful in the evaluation. Their concerns indicate whether the classification system unfairly or erroneously blocks their access to privileges, specific programs, work release, preferred housing, the opportunity for alternatives to incarceration programs, etc. Research suggests that inmates generally evaluate classification positively if they think it is valid.

Evidence from concerned citizens, advocacy groups and the media may also provide insights into the new jail classification. Unfortunately, citizens and the media often, unfortunately, focus only on "false negative" errors. The public is mainly concerned that dangerous criminals are being systematically released, or given insufficient security. They often conclude that jail classifications are overly liberal, or threaten public safety. This conclusion is often erroneous, and is supported by distorted media coverage of rare but graphic or violent incidents.

#### **A. Management Failures During Implementation**

Process evaluation demands special focus on jail managers who have several critical roles and responsibilities. If they fail in these, it is unlikely that lower-level staff will be able to successfully implement and operate a viable classification unit. Management problems may include the following failures:

- Provide appropriate policy and methods for classification
- Ensure that staff are properly trained in classification
- Set up a data collection system for monitoring jail performance
- Ensure that policies are matched to procedures
- Ensure that classification is "used" at the line level
- Ensure that classification data is used for planning and policy decisions by managers.
- Actively manage classification staff and monitor classification operations
- Provide adequate office space, staffing, and other resources for classification
- Educate themselves in classification procedures, policies, and data so that they can use it appropriately.

The levels of achievement of these goals usually become obvious during discussions, and by reviewing the actual work activities of classification staff. Even when these goals are not achieved, line staff must still conduct classification activities, in such situations. Supervision may be vague and disorganized, office space almost non-existent, classification data may be ill-defined or unavailable, and classification procedures may degenerate into "paperwork" with little relationship to the real decisions driving the jail.

If classification procedures are well supported by top management, and the above goals vigilantly sought, classification will drive most line decisions (housing, inmate movements, programming, as well as many administrative policy and planning decisions.

#### **Do Supervisors and Top Management Understand and Use Classification Appropriately?**

A common occurrence when administrators delegate classification

responsibilities to junior officers, is a failure to integrate classification into the planning, monitoring and policy decisions. Much past research has shown that many jail managers have poor appreciation of the benefits of classification, and often misunderstand management uses of classification. This failure may produce disinterest in both implementation and use of classification. Thus, the evaluator must question whether supervisors and administrators understand how to use classification and also supervise the unit. Managers may be questioned on how they supervise the unit, on procedures for analyzing data, and how classification activities and results are reported to top management. These interviews will reveal levels of understanding, training, cooperation, morale, degree of satisfaction, etc.

### **Has Management Provided Clear Policy Guidelines and a "Vision" of What Classification is Aiming to Achieve?**

As noted earlier, management must provide clear direction and policies for classification. Evaluation must also probe whether management has been successful in educating staff on the policies and goals of the new classification. If these management responsibilities have been overlooked or have occurred haphazardly, a "policy vacuum" regarding classification may exist. The evaluator can also assess the clarity with which guiding initiatives and goals appear in the policy and procedures manual. Any vacuum is readily filled by informal policies of the line staff. Loosely worded policy is usually interpreted by line staff from their personal perspectives and values. Thus, administrative policy is replaced by line level policies. **These personal policies of line staff may pull the jail in directions quite antithetical to the formal policies of the facility.**

### **Administrative Support for Classification During and After the Implementation Phase?**

Post-implementation evaluation must assess the degree of continuing political support, as well as staffing and funding for classification. Administrative support for classification may vary from wholehearted to superficial. Their behaviors and decisions may be quite at odds with their rhetoric regarding classification. Administrators may prioritize other issues (local jail politics, fire fighting, etc.) and remain disinterested in classification policy, data or operations. Classification may be conducted mainly for legal and political reasons. This produces a "going by the book" approach where the major purposes of classification are forgotten and staff adopt a superficial compliance with classification requirements.

### **Procedures for Managing and Monitoring Staff?**

The evaluator must assess whether management is using intelligent procedures for managing, directing, and assessing the performance of the classification unit. Accountability procedures, performance appraisal, and quality control may be

either missing or rudimentary, subjective or objective. Without objective procedures to monitor the impact of classification decisions, the classification line staff may lack any direction other than CYA. This is more likely if weak monitoring procedures are coupled with inadequate supervision.

**B. Line-Level Problems**

**Is the Classification Appropriately Used and Understood by Line Staff?**

Evaluation must assess whether the formal procedures are appropriately used. Training and expertise is critical to the successful implementation and correct use of classification. At the line level, classification may appear to be routinely conducted. Yet, in reality, decisions are based on inappropriate criteria (e.g. space available, subjective feelings). Thus, although classification is routinely conducted, it is ignored for actual decision making.

By reviewing the supervision procedures, line/management interactions, and accountability criteria the evaluator can assess whether management have developed appropriate procedures for ensuring that classification line staff actually use the new system for line-level decisions.

**Do Line Staff Understand the New Procedures? Was Training Adequate?**

Staff can be asked to explain their methods and the rationale behind them. This clarifies whether they understand their own methods. More general questions might be asked to test their understanding of the broader field of inmate classification.

**Is the Integrity of Classification Being Maintained?**

The general post-implementation issue is whether the integrity of classification is being maintained. Inadequate accountability and supervision procedures almost always produce a gap between formal procedures and the manner in which classification is actually used by line staff. Process evaluation should include the following issues:

- Are line staff overloaded by huge numbers of classifications per shift?
- Are they scattered across diverse tasks with no clear focus?
- Do they spend their time putting out fires and working in a crisis mode?
- Do they make many "judgment calls" and overrides?
- Is there any resentment, loss of autonomy, or resistance to the procedure which is jeopardizing the integrity of classification processes?

**Override Procedure - Is It Being Abused?**

Overrides can be abused by officers who wish to sabotage the classification, or

who misunderstand it. The evaluator must note the proportions of classifications overridden by officers. If this is high (e.g. beyond 10-20%), management must identify what aspects of the classification are causing the disagreement. This may reveal factors to be modified, added, or omitted, and ultimately allow progressive refinement of the classification. Conversely, if the override rate is less than 3 to 5%, the staff may be "going by the book". This latter style also produces errors which could otherwise be avoided. In the Michigan model, consistent override rates for the small- to medium-sized jails was in the 1.5 to 4% range. In repeated questioning of classification staff from the various jails, the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the instrument's classification assignments which made frequent use of the override option unnecessary.

When evaluating override rates, it is important to identify and separate policy overrides (i.e. a policy that all writ inmates be automatically classified as close custody) from general overrides by classification staff. In larger jails a significant proportion of the overrides may be due to these policy overrides.

### **Are Procedures Matched to Each Major Jail Policy?**

A general principle of "aligning" a new classification system to the organization is that each policy should be matched to an explicit procedure with responsibility assigned to specific staff. Has this been done correctly? If not, the particular policy will seldom be correctly implemented. Unless explicit responsibility is given and clear procedures are assigned, many policies will fail to be effective.

### **Is There Any Evidence of Informal Drift to a "Hard Line" Policy Extreme?**

A "drift" of policy often results from line sabotage and resistance. It may occur through misuse of the override, or by "back door" classifications (Clements 1982). If the informal policies of line officers become dominant, there is usually a trend towards a "hard line" extreme. This will produce excessive proportions of inmates being over-classified into max and high medium. Over-classification errors may escalate dangerously. The evaluator must assess whether this has occurred. High override rates, and numerous inmates being "informally transferred" are often associated with this trend. Correcting this trend requires intensive education, and tighter control over objective procedures (e.g. overrides and back door classifications) so that they are less vulnerable to informal manipulation.

### **Evaluating the Variables Used in the Jail Classification Forms**

In evaluating the variables used to construct classification decision instruments, the main guide is the purpose of the classification. If prediction is important, then the variables chosen must have high predictive validity regarding the behavior to be predicted. If logical and legal processing of offenders is the main

purpose, then appropriate legal variables must be used. The validity and practical usefulness of any classification both depend on data quality. Thus, deficiencies in data must be identified and corrected. This requires assessing the quality, and coverage of data - irrespective of the classification method - against the stated purpose of the system. The following criteria are useful in evaluating classification data:

### **Ambiguity**

The wording of questions on classification forms can be precise or vague and ambiguous. For example, in assessing criminal history, time periods may be omitted, confusion may arise as to whether arrests or convictions should be used, etc. Such vagueness forces line staff to impose their own interpretations. An important task is to design questions of sufficient precision and clarity of meaning.

### **Predictive Validity of Variables**

When the classification has a predictive purpose, both professional associations and courts recommend that risk factors used should have demonstrated predictive validity. Thus, any predictive classification must be evaluated to assess whether the factors used exhibit a predictive relationship to the critical outcomes (e.g. recidivism, escape, suicide, etc.). Decades of research have searched for valid predictors of criminal outcomes (Gottfredson 1987; Brennan 1982). The results of this search have been inconclusive and somewhat disappointing (Monahan, 1982; Solomon and Baird, 1983). It is often argued that the predictive validity of the most commonly used risk factors are insufficient for accurate decision making. However, new findings are continually published in the criminological literature. Thus, evaluators and designers of new classification systems must be knowledgeable regarding current criminological research in order to advise a jail how to select potential risk factors.

When a classification is not predictive, but simply aims to produce logical, legal, and consistent inmate processing, the issue of predictive validity of risk factors is less critical. In this instance, the factors must be assessed according to their logical and legal appropriateness for the orderly and fair separation and processing of inmates.

### **Coverage of Critical Factors: Are There Serious Omissions?**

The coverage of risk factors is important in evaluating classification systems. Objective systems are often critically diminished whenever they omit salient variables. Omission of important variables - particularly when prediction is intended (as in security classifications, suicide risk classification, or pre-trial release) will reduce predictive validity. Thus, inadequate coverage of risk factors can be a serious problem. For example, most security classifications have no

access to juvenile records. Yet, this has been shown to be an important indicator of adult habitual criminal status. Similarly, if a predictive classification of violence uses past records alone, or psychological factors, it will omit critical situational factors. The evaluator must assess whether the coverage of classification variables is consistent with current criminological research, as well as the purpose of the classification.

Coverage in the case of non-predictive classifications (i.e. those aimed at legal, logical, and consistent inmate processing) is important in that if any relevant variables are omitted (e.g. detainers and warrants), decisions will be inconsistent with certain requirements of fairness or legal processing. One strategy is to obtain feedback from staff who test the system in the pilot phase. If some critical variable is omitted they usually notice this, and will take pride in helping to guide the development of the system.

Coverage is always a trade-off between predictive validity and the efficiency and practicality (time/cost) of the classification. An ideal coverage aims to jointly optimize efficiency and predictive validity. Both are needed in applied classification work. The court demand for inclusion of "all relevant variables" is arguably a mission impossible, since this may require a data collection effort quite beyond the technical, financial, and personnel resources of a jail.

### **Officer Reliability in Conducting Classification?**

If different officers using the same procedures reach different scores or different assignments, then inconsistency and unreliability are demonstrated. Reliability can be assessed by giving the same "inmate jackets" to several classification officers and determining whether they reach the same conclusions. Several factors produce inconsistency. If questions are ambiguous or vague, officers may reach different conclusions. Some data is more vulnerable to distortion and inaccuracy. For example, psychological ratings and disciplinary histories are both unreliable (for different reasons) and may produce unreliable classification decisions. Officers may have different training, and may use and interpret the data and procedures in different ways. Other officers may deliberately sabotage or manipulate the procedures to reach decisions which match their own personal values.

### **Efficiency: Is Data Collection Efficient or Time-Consuming?**

Some classification data is easily accessible, inexpensive to obtain, and available in a timely manner. Conversely, other types of data are inaccessible (e.g. juvenile criminal records), may require expensive, specialized staff (e.g. psychiatric assessment), or may require excessive staff effort. When data is difficult or costly to obtain, staff may simply avoid trying to obtain it. Any classification requiring such data will eventually be abandoned. Thus, efficiency of data collection should be evaluated. The development or adoption of a good

jail MIS, integrated with the classification process, can greatly enhance the data collection capabilities.

### **Verification Procedures**

Since classification data is critical, staff should verify the most important factors. Failure to verify risk factors is often hazardous for correctional classifications. For example, failure to verify criminal history may produce serious under-classification errors. Yet, verification is time-consuming, demanding, and sometimes impossible if records are not well maintained or are unavailable. Thus, many jails pay only "lip service" to the need for systematic verification.

## **5.4 Impact Evaluation and Monitoring: Measuring Jail Policy Achievement**

The implementation of a major policy or procedural change (e.g. objective classification) in large bureaucratic organizations such as jails is seldom achieved perfectly. Frequently, some sabotage, resistance, or loss of integrity during the implementation process occurs. The final product may deviate markedly from the new classification system as originally envisioned and designed. Evaluation and systematic monitoring are critical management tools to assess whether the new system is achieving the desired results and whether it is being correctly used. The two aspects of evaluation (i.e. process and impact evaluation designs) are generally used.

Thus, in the post-implementation period management should aggressively maintain continuous monitoring and data gathering system to assess the impact of the new classification system. Data-based monitoring is needed for several of the staff education and feedback functions mentioned earlier.

During post-implementation, management should also examine the impact of the new classification system on the jail. This starts from the specific goals and policies that the new classification is expected to achieve. Jail managers must devise ways to measure and monitor these policies. If these are monitored on an on-going basis, management can assess the impact of the new classification system on the operational success of the jail.

As previously mentioned, the strategic goals of classification in jails generally include:

- Fairness, Consistency
- Least Restrictive Custody
- Efficient inmate processing and management.
- Ensuring the right to appropriate treatment.
- Ensuring accuracy of classification decisions (Minimize both over classification and under classification).
- Ensure Safety (staff, inmates and public)

- Improve data for planning and management decisions.
- Ensure Compliance with legal standards.
- Minimize risks of litigation.
- Reduction of crowding using valid referral patterns.
- Efficient use of staff resources.
- Etc.

To operationally assess these goals, jail managers must enter specific data elements for MIS to reflect these various policy goals. In many instances this data is routinely collected but not used as a policy indicator.

Two examples of assessing important policy goals are now discussed. These are: 1) Inmate Discipline and Safety, and 2) Public Safety. These illustrate the process of selecting data elements to measure policy achievement.

1) Assessing Inmate Discipline, Order and Safety: Disciplinary data and incidents are often monitored for the total facility and for separate modules or "units". Data elements to reflect inmate order and safety may include:

- Days of goodtime lost/month/100 inmates
- Days in disciplinary segregation or Ad.Seg/100 inmates.
- Monthly or weekly number of "violent incidents", overall and for specific segments/units of the agency.
- Assaults or threats on officers/100 inmates/per month
- Number of injuries to staff, inmates or visitors, from medical records
- Number of sexual assaults/100 inmates/per month
- Number of vandalism acts/100 inmates/month
- Number of compensation claims/100 inmates/month
- Number of fires/100 inmates/month
- Number of incidents of Contraband/100 inmates/month
- Average Inmate infractions /by month/by classification, etc.

A useful approach is to develop an aggregate index based on a weighted sum of these elements to reflect the general disciplinary and safety status of the jail. This would summarize the many specific data elements in the above list. These assessment criteria should also be monitored by each security level population.

2) Public Safety:

Public safety is another correctional goal to be monitored by correctional facilities and programs. Data elements reflecting this policy goal may include:

- Percentage of recidivism of released offenders (and breakdowns by various crime categories, demographics, etc.).
- Percentage of recidivism of offenders participating in alternative to

incarceration programs.

- Average time to new arrest (total and selected sub-categories of offenders).
- Rates of new crime for inmates released pre-trial.
- FTA rates for all categories of pretrial releases.
- Successful completion rates for inmates participating in alternative to incarceration programs.
- Etc.

With these operational indicators routinely collected and stored in the MIS, management can request daily, monthly, or quarterly reports to indicate trends over time. These trends will help indicate whether the jail and the local corrections system is moving towards or further away from its policy goal of public safety.

## **5.5 Continuing to Develop the System: Enhanced Classification Applications**

In addition to the typical custodial management functions of inmate classification, an effective system can also facilitate several other less traditional applications. These include:

- Pre-Trial Release
- Community Corrections (Early Release)
- Linkage with Courts (Monitoring and Fast Tracking)
- Easing of Jail Overcrowding

### **Pre-Trial Release**

The overall operation of the classification system may also include provisions for the screening of unsentenced inmates for pre-trial release. This may be an extension of the internal security classification system. This system, if designed appropriately, can identify an eligible unsentenced sub-population for further pre-trial release screening. For example, with the Michigan model one of the custody levels within the overall security classification is designated as Level-5 "Medium Pre-Sentence". This group has been identified through the decision tree as: not incarcerated on a felonious assaultive person crime; does not have a prior criminal history of same; no escape history from a secure facility; do not have 3 or more prior felony convictions; no detainers or warrants or other pending cases; no evidence of institutional behavior problems and are unsentenced. This group represents the most eligible unsentenced sub-population for further pre-trial release consideration. Additional screening criteria are then applied including: length of time incarcerated, prior failure to appear histories, residence, stability, substance abuse concerns, etc. Appropriate, low-risk inmates can thus be screened into the pre-trial release

program as an extension of the security-based classification system.

## **Community Corrections (Early Release)**

This application works in a similar manner to the pre-trial release process. In Michigan, for example, the minimum security group is identified as a target population for alternative to incarceration punishment options. The classification system identifies the sentenced minimum security population and further breaks this security level into three custody levels: minimum; low minimum and very low. By the logic of the decision tree instrument, the minimum security "very low custody level (8)", inmates are misdemeanants with ties to the community; the "low custody level (7)", inmates are primarily felons with ties to the community and misdemeanants with no community ties; and the "minimum custody level (6)", are minimum security felons with no or limited ties to the community.

Through the jail's classification policy and procedure alternative program, eligibility is determined for each of these minimum security custody levels. Eligible programs for these minimum security inmates may include: community service work; work/school release; house arrest (with or without tether); victim restitution; community residential programs; residential treatment programs; etc. The classification system thus identifies an "eligible" minimum security population and then further sub-divides the group for appropriateness for the program(s) being considered with increased levels of supervision. Further screening factors for program participation may include: length of sentence; length of time served; motivation and willingness to participate; previous program participation; residence; stability; transportation; etc.

## **Linkage with Courts (Monitoring and Fast Tracking)**

The new objective classification system and the data generated provides an opportunity to enhance communications with the courts. The data generated, for example, can be used to produce routine reports to the courts or individual judges identifying the unsentenced/pre-trial population in the jail by the number of days incarcerated to assist in expediting the arraignment/pre-trial/adjudication process. Felons, for example, who by the nature of the offense or prior criminal histories are likely to receive a prison sentence can be identified and monitored through the classification and data system for "fast tracking" by the prosecutor and the courts. This will minimize the length of time incarcerated at the local level.

A second example of enhanced classification applications with the courts may apply to local jurisdictions where overcrowding forces early release orders by the court due to court imposed caps on jail capacity. The classification system can supply the court with a list of inmates most appropriate for court ordered early release ranked in order of security, length of time incarcerated, crime class, etc. This has shown to be very helpful to the courts when forced to make these kinds of decisions.

A third example of classification forming a bridge with the courts is in the ability of the classification system (linked with needs assessments and in-house inmate program participation) to provide the courts with information which may be helpful in pre-sentence information gathering. Information relative to the offenders' security level (as determined by the classification instruments criteria), assessed needs, participation in in-house self help programs, willingness to participate in programs upon release, attitude and motivation can all be tied to the classification system. This information, provided by the jail, can assist the courts in making sentencing decisions and sentence modifications at a later date.

### **Easing Overcrowding**

Each of the above extended or enhanced applications of classification can serve to alleviate jail overcrowding. "Jail Days Saved" can be increased through the implementation of pre-trial release programs, alternatives for portions of the minimum security sentenced population, and through screening the inmate population for expeditious offender processing. These applications, driven by an effective classification system, have been demonstrated to effectively manage jail crowding, efficiently manage the jail's limited resources and avoid or delay costly new construction.