



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1110

April 30, 2021

Joanna Carns  
Office of Corrections Ombuds  
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW  
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Ms. Carns:

As it pertains to the Office of Corrections Ombuds' 'investigation into the DOC's single cell policies,' the department convened a workgroup to evaluate and revise policy language for policies [300.380 Classification and Custody Facility Plan Review](#), [400.020 Facility Capacity Management and Space Standards](#) and [420.140 Cell/Room Assignment](#). Provided below are the actions taken by the Department and its recommended policy amendments.

### **Overview of Action Taken**

The operational divisions of Reentry, Prisons and Health Services convened a workgroup to evaluate the agency's current single cell process. The participating staff encompassed the operational areas of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordination, mental health, medical services, missioned housing, classification, prison program management, transportation and prison administration. They evaluated the process and had the following findings/recommendations:

- Medical and mental health requests should be part of the process.
- The new process will reside in policy 300.380 Classification and Custody Facility Plan Review. New policy language will not preclude immediate action required in policy 420.140 Cell/Room Assignment.
- Expand the definition for security risk to include all who commit murder, aggravated sexual assault, aggravated assault with life threatening injuries, or other extreme safety or security concerns on another person while incarcerated. Previously, policy only included these acts committed against a cellmate.
- Policy 490.700 Transgender, Intersex and/or Gender Non-Conforming Housing and Supervision and the policy-mandated headquarters multi-disciplinary team (MDT), working with facility teams, will continue to determine housing for individuals to whom this policy pertains.
- Additionally, the group recommended that if these same three crimes were committed on a cellmate, they will have an indefinite single cell assignment, barring facility emergency operations.
- The group determined the referral to Headquarters as sufficient review and did not see the need for an additional appellate review as all the leadership staff are represented in the current committees of Max Custody Committee, Headquarters Community Screening Committee (HCSC) and Transgender Headquarters Committee.

### **Final Recommendations**

The Department has determined the best way forward is the adoption of expanding HCSC to include the consideration and approval of single cell requests that do not fall under the current

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process of safety and security as considered in the Max Custody Committee, and the Transgender, Intersex and Gender Non-Conforming evaluated with Headquarters MDT. The HCSC addition will add medical and mental health requests, which are not included within the previously mentioned committees.

The HCSC currently has mental health leadership and will request medical leadership to be included in those meetings where consideration for single cell is on the agenda. Additionally, the ADA compliance manager will be included to ensure ADA consideration and/or recommendations will be part of HCSC consideration. The chief medical officer and director of mental health are in support of the single cell protocol revision.

Corrections will also update the current training tools and job aids for single cell review and determination to support expanded process steps and staff actions.

The following is the additional policy language for 300.380 to address this process change. Under Section VII, an additional section C will be added.

A. *Single Cell Screening and Assignment:*

1. *Case managers will complete single cell screenings when an individual does not have a history of murder, aggravated sexual assault or aggravated assault with life threatening injuries (as determined by a medical professional) on another person during any period of incarceration.*
2. *Case managers will initiate a single cell screening in the electronic file, if one has not been completed or the incarcerated individual has committed murder, aggravated assault (with life threatening injuries as determined by a medical professional) or aggravated sexual assault of another individual during any period of incarceration.*
3. *Incarcerated individuals may be assigned a single cell/room for a specified period for the following reasons:*
  - a. *Medical condition or infectious disease as recommended by the chief medical officer/or designee. Designee must be facility medical director or above and approved by HCSC.*
    - 1) *Health Services will notify the case manager of the need to initiate a single cell screening for medical or infectious disease reasons to include recommended timeframes, if applicable.*



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- b. *Mental Health condition as recommended by director of mental health/or designee. Designee must be psychologist 4 or above and approved by HCSC.*
    - 1) *Mental health professionals will notify the case manager of the need to initiate a single cell screening for mental health needs to include recommended timeframes, if applicable.*
  - c. *Any history of murder, aggravated sexual assault, aggravated assault with life threatening injuries, or other extreme safety or security concerns on another person while incarcerated, as decided by Headquarters Max Custody Committee.*
    - 1) *Individuals confirmed to have committed murder, aggravated assault with life threatening injuries or aggravated sexual assault on another person who was assigned the same cell/room will be approved for indefinite single cell assignment.*
    - 2) *During emergency operations, the incident commander may make temporary and time-limited exceptions.*
4. *The screening and approval process does not preclude initial requirements and guidance, per DOC 420.140 Cell/Room Assignment.*

Sincerely,

on behalf of

Steve Sinclair, Secretary  
Washington Department of Corrections