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## Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration Assessments: Validity Review and Recommendations

### INTRODUCTION

The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA), within the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, provides a coordinated system of services to supervise, confine, and rehabilitate juvenile offenders. The Washington State juvenile sentencing system commits only the more serious or chronic juvenile offenders to JRA custody.<sup>1</sup> The county juvenile courts are responsible for the remaining juvenile offenders. JRA oversees four types of placements: state institutions, forest camps, group homes, and parole.

**JRA institutions and forest camps** provide treatment, education, and/or work experience in a secure facility. There are three state institutions (Green Hill, Maple Lane, and Echo Glen) and three forestry camps (Naselle, Mission Creek, and Indian Ridge).

**Group homes** provide three types of programs in which youth live in small group facilities while they work and/or attend schools in the community. These programs involve state operated group homes, private agency group homes (called Community Residential Placements), and Community Commitment Programs in cooperation with county detention facilities.

**Parole** is the supervision of juvenile offenders who are released into the community after serving their sentence in JRA custody. Parole counselors provide structure, supervision, and family support to paroled youth. As a result of legislation passed during the 1997 session, parole is restricted to sex offenders, and intensive parole to the 25 percent highest-risk youth released from JRA.

In addition to these placements, JRA provides substance abuse treatment, specialized treatment for mentally ill youth, and sexual offender treatment.

The mission of JRA is to protect the public, hold young offenders accountable for their crimes, and reduce criminal behavior through a continuum of preventative, rehabilitative, and transition programs in residential and community settings.<sup>2</sup> To accomplish these goals, JRA conducts assessments to determine the most appropriate placement of youth within JRA facilities.

- When a youth is admitted to JRA, diagnostic staff conduct the *Initial Security Classification Assessment (ISCA)*. This assessment procedure combines a risk level with a current offense seriousness level to determine the youth's initial security classification.
- Subsequent *changes* in a youth's security classification is determined by a youth's potential for risk to public safety, residential safety and security, and the youth's rehabilitative progress.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 13.40.160

<sup>2</sup> Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration Vision, Mission and Core Values, Department of Social and Health Services, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, 1998.

The *Community Risk Assessment* (CRA) is used by JRA to guide the re-classification decision. The policy and procedures for changing a youth's security classification are defined in JRA Bulletin No. 5, which was published on February 2, 1996.

- The 1997 Washington State Legislature directed JRA to develop policies to guard against sexually aggressive acts by resident youth against each other. The legislation directed JRA to develop an assessment process to identify sexually aggressive and sexually vulnerable youth. In response, JRA developed the Sexually Aggressive and Vulnerable Youth Residential Screen (SAVY).<sup>3</sup> This screening tool was implemented in January 1998.
- The 1997 Washington State Legislature also made significant changes to the sex offender community notification statutes. The Department of Corrections, the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board, and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration were directed to develop a consistent approach to risk assessment including standards for risk level assignment for the purpose of public notification. The Minnesota Sex Offender Screening Tool (SOST) was adopted for sex offender classification and law enforcement notification in Washington State. The Washington State SOST was implemented by JRA in January 1998.

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<sup>3</sup> *An Assessment of Sexually Aggressive and Youth Vulnerable to Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration Facilities*, Department of Social and Health Services, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, December 1997.