

STATE OF IOWA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



# An Introduction to Incarceration in Iowa

January 2010

IOWA MEDICAL AND CLASSIFICATION CENTER  
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## **Why Did We Develop This Book?**

The Department of Corrections staff realizes that you may have many questions and concerns as you enter the system. We adhere to best practices in corrections. We realize family and social supports are also very important factors in leading to success. Therefore, we created this guidebook to provide an overview of the incarceration process and answer some frequently asked questions.

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## Introduction

Separation from a loved one due to incarceration can be emotionally, spiritually, and economically overwhelming.

This guidebook has been developed for you as a resource in understanding the rules and regulations that govern the Iowa institutions. Although this guidebook may not answer all of your questions, it is intended to provide general information about the Iowa system.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. It is important to know that this guidebook is for **informational purposes only**, and the regulations outlined herein are **subject to change**. It is important to remember that if changes occur in the Department of Correction's policies and procedures, institutional rules, and in state laws, those changes override this guidebook.

### Mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections

The mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections is to: ***Advance successful offender reentry to protect the public, staff and offenders from victimization.***

### Organization of the Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is a state government agency which is part of the Executive branch and is headed by the Director of Corrections, a cabinet officer appointed by the Governor. The Department of Corrections consists of nine institutions located throughout the state and the DOC Central Office Headquarters located in Des Moines, Iowa. Community-based correctional services such as probation, parole, and work release are provided through contracts between the DOC and the Judicial Districts; however, the focus of this booklet is to provide information about the Iowa institutional system, not community-based corrections.

The DOC is organized into two geographic regions: Western and Eastern. A regional deputy director oversees each region. A warden or superintendent provides leadership at each institution and reports to the regional deputy director.

The Board of Parole is not a division of the DOC. It is an independent body whose members are appointed by the Governor. The Parole Board is the releasing authority for offenders in the DOC.

## **Before you get to Prison**

You are allowed to bring only a few personal items with you to prison they are as follows:

A bible, address book, a small amount of photos, and any cash that you have anything else, have your people come and get or discard it in the county jail before you get to IMCC this will help speed up the intake process.

## **The Reception Process**

### **What happens when you first enter the Department of Corrections?**

All offenders arrive at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center in Coralville, Iowa. This institution is the **reception center** for the Iowa DOC. The reception process will last about four to six weeks. Counseling staff are available to assist you in making an adequate adjustment to the institution.

During the reception process, staff will gather information about family history, educational background, work history, medical history, and criminal history. Medical, dental, and mental health screening is completed during this time you will be tested and interviewed to determine individual needs and appropriate institutional placement.

You will be involved in an orientation process and receive information which explains rules, penalties, disciplinary procedures, how to obtain health services, and other important information.

Your case will be reviewed and a decision will be made based on the information gathered as to which institution you will be transferred to upon leaving the Iowa Medical and Classification Center.

## **Classification**

The purpose of the classification process is to assign you to an institution that can best meet your educational, vocational, physical health, mental health, and other treatment needs. Additionally, classification is necessary to ensure the safety of the general public and the needs of the Department.

### **How is it determined where you will be housed?**

You will be classified based on conduct, types of criminal offenses, sentence length, and other factors. Classifications are reviewed periodically. Some of the many factors considered during classification reviews include your current and past criminal behavior, your adjustment to the institutional setting including institutional behavior,

escapes, and other rule violations, current age, and amount of time served versus time remaining to be served.

### **What is custody classification and what are the custody levels?**

Custody classification refers to you being placed into a custody level. Each institution is operated on one or more custody levels. Those custody levels are **minimum, medium, and maximum.**

**Minimum Custody** – This custody is the least restrictive and has the most privileges of the custody grades. Offenders in this level may work on the grounds away from the unit or away from the institution with appropriate supervision.

**Medium Custody** – This custody is more restrictive than minimum custody. Offenders are generally restricted to working within the boundaries of the institution and are usually assigned to dormitory or cell setting in medium custody.

**Maximum Custody** – This custody is more restrictive than medium custody. It is for those who may be an escape risk or have been convicted of violent crimes, or their actions in institutional setting have shown they may be a behavior problem. Maximum custody housing is generally made up of single cells and divided into cellblocks, within a building or unit. Offenders in this custody are also under constant supervision.

All offenders undergo routine custody reviews. Their current custody is reviewed to determine if the offender is appropriately assigned to the institution. Progression to a less restrictive custody grade is a privilege granted to offenders. It is awarded by obeying rules and meeting other mandatory requirements. Other factors are also taken into consideration including pending charges, physical and mental health needs, risk to the community, risk to other offenders and staff, number and nature of infractions, and time since last infraction.

### **Are there other types of classification or housing assignments?**

Most offenders are assigned to general population. This means you may move about the institution as needed due to job or program assignment, for recreation, and mealtime. In addition to the various custody levels, offenders may also be assigned to a **segregation status**, where offenders are separated from the regular population. All segregation is used to manage behavior.

These assignments include:

**Administrative Segregation** – The classification status that temporarily removes an offender from the population and places them in a single cell on a short-term basis to protect staff and other offenders, preserve order, provide control or protection of the

offender pending final classification or disciplinary action.

**Disciplinary Detention** –Disciplinary Detention is a determined number of days an offender is in segregation as the result of being found guilty in a hearing of a Major disciplinary report.

**Protective Custody** – A classification status in which an offender is separated from the regular population because the offender’s safety or well-being is perceived to be at risk or for which there may be concern for a variety of reasons. An offender may request protective custody, but a committee decides if protective custody is necessary.

## Offender Programs

### What programs are available to offenders?

Programs provide the opportunity for offenders to play an important role in promoting personal growth and learning more responsible behavior which may eventually help them to become contributing members of the community. Activities are also an important part of the mission and philosophy of the Department of Corrections. Programs vary at each institution and may not be immediately available.

The following is a brief description of the programs.

**Case Management** – Case management is a program of services provided to each offender in the Department of Corrections. Every offender is assigned a **Counselor**. The Counselor works with the offender to help determine his or her needs, risks, and interests. Case management provides the services and resources deemed necessary to improve each offender’s likelihood of success by promoting law-abiding behavior.

**Work Assignments** –Each institution has a variety of jobs for which offenders may apply for and work. Each institution depends on the offenders to assist in the kitchen, provide housekeeping, and other services to maintain the institution and support other governmental agencies. Requiring offenders to work is an important effort to teach good work habits and encourage offenders to work when they return to society.

**Education** –Programs are offered for offenders to work on their literacy skills, their GED, and/or to learn a vocational skill in a wide variety of areas. Special programs are available to offenders with learning disabilities or special needs. Some programs are required and some are provided as an incentive to learn. The DOC partners with the Community Colleges in Iowa to provide these educational programs. Literacy classes, high school diploma and sometimes college coursework can be accommodated. Information about educational opportunities is provided to offenders

during the orientation process.

**Religious Services** – The DOC authorizes religious practices for all major religions. Organized worship services are provided for many faith groups. The Department of Corrections employs chaplains at many institutions. The Chaplain’s role is to assist and encourage offenders in spiritual matters and provide spiritual counseling. Chaplains, along with religious volunteers from the community, provide Bible study, worship services, religious training, and ministry to the offenders. The DOC has an established policy on what religious items offenders can have in their possession. There is a review and approval process to follow if an offender is practicing a non-scheduled or new religious accommodation requested.

**Parenting Programs** – A number of classes are offered that assist offenders in being better parents by helping them to recognize the needs of their children and their responsibilities to them. These programs help offenders work to maintain and improve relationships with their children and family during this difficult time and upon their release.

**Reentry Case Planning** – Refers to planning for an offender’s release back to the community. It is very important to his or her success that the offender learn new skills and develop good habits to be law-abiding. Planning for release needs to begin when the offender enters the system through proper assessment and programming to meet the needs. Such programs may assist offenders in planning how to find employment, housing or transportation, continuing in their addiction recovery, furthering their education, and seeking available resources in the community. Family and friends can assist and provide support and encouragement for them to succeed. If the offender will be under continued supervision such as parole, friends and family can assist by communicating with the supervising parole officer. If the offender will be living at your residence, you can ensure the home maintains compliance with release criteria guidelines for community-based home placement.

**Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** – These are voluntary programs that occur in many of the institutions. It is up to the offender whether or not to participate in AA or NA but he or she is encouraged to attend to help provide support in their recovery.

**Recreation, Arts and Crafts** – Offenders are provided the opportunity to participate in constructive recreational and leisure time activities. Some of the activities in which offenders may participate include those aimed at improving mental outlook, physical conditioning, cultural experiences, competitions and special events. These activities are usually offered after work duties are completed.

**Substance Abuse Treatment Programs** – An assessment for substance abuse may be completed as part of the reception process. If treatment is needed, various levels of treatment are provided at different institutions throughout the state ranging from licensed inpatient treatment to aftercare.

## Communications

### Can offenders use the telephone?

Yes. You are allowed to make telephone calls. These calls are automatically limited to 20 minutes by the Offender Pre-Paid Telephone Service. The DOC Offender Telephone Accounts Pre-paid form must be completed and sent in with each deposit to be placed on an offenders telephone account. This form is available at all institutions and on the Departments web site at [www.doc.state.ia.us](http://www.doc.state.ia.us). Only cashier's checks or money orders will be accepted. The minimum deposit is \$20.00. Deposits will **not** be accepted prior to your arrival in the DOC and must be designated to you. They must be identified by your name and matching DOC I.D. number. Deposits may also be designated to a specific telephone number as well. Toll free numbers and 900 numbers are prohibited.

### All deposits must be mailed directly to:

IDOC  
Offender Telephone Accounts  
PO Box 1417  
Fort Madison IA 52627

### Can an offender send and receive mail?

Yes. One of the most important ways to communicate with the offender is through letters. The DOC encourages family and friends to write. For security reasons, all incoming and outgoing mail will be checked to see if it contains any illegal or unauthorized items. Legal mail is opened by you in the presence of staff. Offenders who have no money *may* be eligible to receive two free stamped envelopes per week. Send letters to:

Iowa Medical and Classification Center  
C/o **OFFENDER NAME AND NUMBER**  
2700 Coral Ridge Ave.  
Coralville, Iowa 52241

## Visitation

Visitation by family and friends is encouraged and can make a positive difference during your incarceration. The Department of Corrections understands the importance of maintaining contact with family and friends. However, you are not

assigned to specific locations for the convenience of visitation.

Visitation rules have been established to ensure the safety of visitors, offenders, and staff. These rules are listed on the visitor application and posted in areas accessible to visitors. Visitation rules are also available on the Iowa DOC website at [www.doc.state.ia.us/documents/OffenderVisiting.pdf](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/documents/OffenderVisiting.pdf). It is important to remember that visitation is a privilege which can be restricted for offenders and visitors who violate the rules.

## **Offender Conduct Rules and Disciplinary Procedures**

Rules are established and must be followed. Good behavior of offenders is expected and necessary to ensure safety and security for both the offenders and staff. The rules, disciplinary procedures, and sanctions can be found in institution offender handbooks and rulebooks.

There are two types of disciplinary reports that may be issued:

- 1.) A Class II (minor) report – for minor infractions
- 2.) A Class I (major) report – for more serious infractions

## **Searches**

Offenders are subject to a search at any time. Searches may be done at random or planned. Routine searches, also called “pat down” searches, maybe done by male and female staff, and are normally done while you are fully dressed. Complete searches are called “strip searches,” where you are required to remove your clothing so as to include a visual search of the body. “Area searches” are searches of living quarters, work areas, recreational areas, visiting areas, etc. and may be done at any time. Offenders who, in any way, interfere with or fail to cooperate fully with staff are subject to disciplinary action.

## **Offender Access to the Courts**

Offenders confined to the Iowa Department of Corrections are provided access to the Courts and its attendant administrators, clerks, judges, attorneys, and Ombudspersons for the purpose of safeguarding their statutory and constitutionally mandated rights pursuant to IDOC policy (IO-OR-05).

## **Health Care Services**

The DOC provides health care services for medical, mental health, and dental needs. Initial assessments for each offender are completed at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center (IMCC). Initial medical, mental, and dental treatment are

offered at no cost to the offender. If you initiate, question, or request the need for treatment through a Health Service Request, a \$3.00 co-pay fee may be assessed. No offender is denied access to health care, timeliness of care, or quality of care due to the inability to pay.

IMCC follows the Center for Disease Control guidelines to protect against the transmission of infectious disease. IMCC, like any medical care provider, must abide by the guidelines governing your right to confidentiality of your medical records. Offenders are encouraged to complete a release of information form to be sent to their previous provider(s) for ongoing medical conditions. This can be initiated by the offender through your case manager/counselor. The signed release gives the provider your permission to have medical records forwarded to the institution's medical unit for review and to have as a part of the medical file.

## **Mental Health Services**

Each new offender is given a mental health screening. General mental health services are available at all institutions. Typically, psychologists and social workers provide services to address most issues related to mental health. In addition, psychiatric services are available for those offenders who require treatment with medications.

## **Food Services**

### **What types of meals are served?**

Offender meals are composed of healthy foods which contain approximately 3,000 calories per day. We serve one cold and two hot meals daily with a variety of fruits, vegetables, starches and meats. Many of the foods are grown in gardens and processed by offenders. The menus are evaluated by registered dietitians to ensure compliance with the recommend dietary allowances suggested by federal guidelines.

## **Other Information Related to the Offender's Stay**

### **Can offenders have personal items?**

Yes. You are allowed certain personal items purchased through commissary. Types of items and amount of each item that is allowed may vary from one institution to another. Personal items are limited due to fire safety codes, storage space availability, sanitation regulations, and for security and safety reasons. A list of items allowed may be available at the institution where you are housed. Unauthorized items or excessive amounts of personal items are considered contraband. These may be mailed home or be discarded.

## *Institutional Abbreviations*

IMCC – Iowa Medical and Classification Center (Coralville)

ASP – Anamosa State Penitentiary (Anamosa)

ICIW – Iowa Correctional Institution for Women (Mitchellville)

ISP – Iowa State Penitentiary (Fort Madison)

CCF – Clarinda Correctional Facility (Clarinda)

FDCF – Fort Dodge Correctional Facility (Fort Dodge)

NCCF – North Central Correctional Facility (Rockwell City)

NCF – Newton Correctional Facility (Newton)

MPCF – Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility (Mount Pleasant)

UIHC – University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

