

Final Adopted New APA Rule #06030, DOC Policy #345
Correctional Field Staff Caseload Capacity
Effective October 7, 2006

Vermont Department of Corrections: Administrative Rule on
Correctional Field Staff Caseload Capacity
DOC Policy #345

1. AUTHORITY

3 V.S.A. § 801 et seq. Act 63 § 22 of the 2005 Legislative session (S.156).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this proposed rule is to meet Vermont statutory requirements that the Department of Corrections establish 1) guidelines under which it will determine whether it has sufficient trained correctional staff to manage size of caseloads which include offenders reintegrating from its correctional facilities, 2) the actions it will take to manage caseload size and 3) the process it will use to request additional staff resources.

3. DEFINITIONS

Conditional Re-entry: A furlough by which a sentenced offender is released to the community under supervision at or beyond their minimum release date.

Furlough: An extension of the limits of confinement of an inmate to locations outside a correctional facility.

Reintegration Furlough: A furlough by which a sentenced offender is released to the community under supervision prior to their minimum release date.

Response Supervision Caseload: A caseload of persons on probation and parole, that, because of lower severity of offense and, generally, lower risk to re-offend, requires limited supervision services. Such caseloads may include offenders transitioning from Risk Management supervision caseloads.

Risk Management Caseload: A caseload of persons on probation, parole, Supervised Community Sentence and furlough that, because of severity of offense and risk to re-offend, requires higher supervision and case management services in smaller caseloads.

Supervised Community Sentence (SCS): A court-imposed sentence of incarceration to be served in a community setting subject to the rules of the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections. These offenders are under the jurisdiction of the Parole Board.

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4. REVIEW AND DOCUMENTATION OF CASELOAD CAPACITIES

- a. The Department will define and document, in writing, its management practices and processes to ensure that there are sufficient trained correctional field staff to support the successful reintegration of offenders from its correctional facilities.
- b. The Department will reassess the appropriateness of its written documentation as defined in section 4 (a.) above, at least every year. This reassessment will take into account changes in best practice, legislation and technological advances.
- c. In order to ensure that caseload capacities allow for the support of successful reintegration of incarcerated offenders, the Department will institute procedures which address the following:
 - Ongoing review of local caseload capacities in order to support adequate supervision of these offenders
 - Assurances that caseloads are of such a number and kind as to allow for adequate supervision of these offenders
 - Case management practices that support the efficient termination, discharge or transfer to a more appropriate level of supervision of probation cases in order to allow for adequate supervision of offenders re-entering the community.

5. CONSIDERATIONS IN DETERMINING ADEQUACY OF NUMBER OF TRAINED CORRECTIONAL FIELD STAFF

- a. The Department will, mindful of fiscal constraints, ensure that the number of trained correctional field staff is sufficient both to ensure community safety (i.e., ability of the Department to respond to known offender behavior that is out of compliance with conditions of release and/or the law and the ability to support victims); and to support successful reintegration of offenders from its correctional facilities (i.e., actively working in a collaborative way with offenders, interested community members, community-based organizations and state agencies in the transition from incarceration to community).
- b. The Department of Corrections will hire correctional field staff who meet initial job requirements. Such staff will be trained in necessary skill development using a variety of strategies to include, but not be limited to, formal training, staff mentoring and e-learning. The Department will manage the performance of staff through, but not limited to, supervisory meetings, peer supervision, trainings and written evaluations.
- c. The Department will maintain and review no less than annually statistics regarding staff retention rates in the field and develop planning to address recruitment, training and retention issues identified in this review.

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6. CONSIDERATIONS IN THE DETERMINATION OF CASELOAD CAPACITY THAT INCLUDES OFFENDERS RE-ENTERING THE COMMUNITY

The Department will determine appropriate capacities for caseloads which include offenders who reintegrate from its correctional facilities, considering the following:

- a. ***Offender Considerations:*** A review of offender characteristics will be conducted to distinguish those offenders who require less supervision to ensure public safety from those who require more intensive and intrusive intervention. This will include, but not be limited to, such characteristics as:

Risk to re-offend: DOC assessment technology will reflect best practice at the time caseload decisions are being considered. Assessment technology will also take into account caseload composition and psycho-social risk factors that may influence risk to re-offend.

Severity and seriousness of offense: determined by the conviction of record or behavior reflected in the affidavit.

- b. ***Systems Considerations:*** Local office caseloads and task assignment processes will be reviewed when assigning offenders to correctional staff. In general, field sites will maintain larger caseloads of those offenders who require less supervision to ensure public safety and smaller caseloads of those who require more intensive and intrusive supervision. This will include, but not be limited to, such characteristics as:

Legal status: The Department is responsible for the supervision of offenders in a variety of legal statuses. Offenders in these statuses -furlough, conditional re-entry, reintegration furlough, risk management probation and parole - generally require intensive supervision in smaller caseloads. Other statuses include reparative and low risk probation and supervised community sentence. Offenders in these legal statuses are generally supervised in larger caseloads.

Related, Required Non-Casework Duties: Correctional field staff assignment sometimes includes related non-casework activities, e.g., co-facilitation of treatment and education groups, conducting investigations and related report writing and supporting the activities of community reparative or reentry boards. These assignments will be considered in assessing optimal staff caseload capacity in a given region.

Intakes and Discharges: Prior to new assignments, the number of discharges will be taken into consideration. This will include intakes and discharges from individual staff caseloads, a given region or the system statewide.

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7. CASELOAD CAPACITY

The Department supervises offenders in a variety of categories. In order to establish appropriate caseload ratios for offenders re-entering the community, it is necessary to establish appropriate ratios for all other offenders on community supervision. The Department distinguishes between caseloads that need comprehensive case management (Risk Management caseloads) and those requiring limited services (Response Supervision caseloads).

8. REVIEW

a. The Department shall obtain the approval of the Corrections Oversight Committee prior to establishing or changing caseload standards. The Department shall consult with the legislature if it experiences difficulty in managing appropriate caseload levels as defined in Department administrative directive.

b. A review of departmental directives associated with this rule will be completed with any necessary updates of relevant documents and procedures within one (1) year of this rule taking effect.