



Policy Directive 11

Prisoners Placed in Observation and Medical Observation Cells

- Relevant instruments:** [Prisons Act 1981](#)
[Prison Regulations 1982](#)
[Policy Directive 5 – Use of Force](#)
[Policy Directive 32 – Prisoners at Risk of Self Harm of Requiring Additional Support and Monitoring](#)
[At Risk Management System \(ARMS\) Manual](#)
[Support and Monitoring System \(SAMS\) Manual](#)

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy Directive is to establish clear protocols for the placement of prisoners in an observation or medical observation cell for reasons of self-harm or to aid closer supervision.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following:

- all staff and contracted service providers working within public prisons
- all staff and contracted service providers working in privately operated prisons.

3. Context

There are occasions where the behaviour or medical condition of a prisoner warrants their placement in an observation or medical observation cell. The placement is designed to minimise the opportunity for self-harm and to aid closer supervision.

4. Definitions and acronyms

ACCO	Assistant Commissioner Custodial Operations
ADR	Assistant Director Residential (or equivalent position, applicable to private prisons)
ARMS	At Risk Management System
ASO	Assistant Superintendent Operations
Designated Superintendent	The Superintendent as defined in s36 of the Act and includes any reference to the position responsible for the management of a private prison under Part IIIA of the Act. Does not extend to the Officer in Charge of a prison.
Medical Emergency	A medical issue which requires an urgent medical response or treatment to save a life or prevent serious harm to a patient. A medical emergency requires immediate action to prevent further deterioration of the patient's condition.
OIC	Officer in Charge
PCS	Prison Counselling Service
SAMS	Support and Monitoring System
Superintendent	The designated Superintendent or Officer in Charge (OIC) of a public prison, the Director or OIC of a private prison or the Director of a privately operated custodial service provider.
The Act	<i>Prisons Act 1981.</i>

5. Principles

- 5.1 Prisoners are placed in an observation or medical observation cell for their welfare.
- 5.2 Placement in an observation or medical observation cell is never used as punishment or in a punitive manner.
- 5.3 Placement is for the shortest period necessary.
- 5.4 Every care must be taken to remove any ligature points and to reduce the risk that a prisoner can self-harm.
- 5.5 Consideration should be given to making available as many amenities as is practicable (see [Appendix 1 - Regime/Access to Facilities](#)). The availability of discretionary items available to a prisoner in an Observation or Medical Observation Cell shall be reviewed by the Designated Superintendent when necessary.

6. Placement, authorisation, review and removal

- 6.1 Observation or medical cell placement reasons and decisions, and subsequent reviews or removal decisions from an observation or medical observation cells shall be in accordance with the below:

Placement reason	Placement decision made by:	Placement review or removal made by:
Risk of self harm where alternative strategies are not practical	Superintendent or Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG)	Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG)
As an interim measure pending full assessment of a prisoner considered to be at risk	Superintendent	Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG)
On the recommendation of medical officers/nursing staff/PCS (Prison Counselling Service) to monitor a medical or psychological condition	Superintendent upon advise from Health Services Staff/PCS	Superintendent upon advice from Health Services Staff/PCS
When a concern exists that a prisoner has injected/ingested a harmful substance and other medical options are not required	Superintendent (Health Services to be notified immediately)	Superintendent upon advice from Health Services Staff
Prisoner considered at risk and requiring medical placement to monitor a medical or psychological condition or when a concern exists that a prisoner has injected/ingested a harmful substance and other medical options are not required	Superintendent/ Health Services/PCS and Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG)	Superintendent upon advice of Health Services Staff/PCS and PRAG approval (before removal from the observation cell)

- 6.2 Placement in an observation or medical observation cell for whatever reason requires careful consideration and other options should be considered before a decision is made. It should not be an action of first resort.

- 6.3 Placement and management of prisoners in observation cells who are at risk of self-harm shall be in accordance with [Policy Directive 32 – Prisoners at Risk of Self Harm](#) and the [At Risk Management System \(ARMS\) Manual](#).
- 6.4 If health service staff and superintendent disagree with the placement of any prisoner in medical observation, the Assistant Commissioner Custodial Operations and the Director Health Services should be immediately notified to provide suitable direction. In the case of privately run prisons, the Assistant Director Residential (or equivalent position) should be immediately notified.

7. Management routine

- 7.1 The regime ([Appendix 1 - Regime/Access to Facilities](#)) contains a range of minimum requirements, and discretionary decisions that shall be determined by the superintendent at the time of initial placement. The primary consideration shall be the care and well being of the prisoner as the regime is not to be equated to a punishment regime.
- 7.2 Placement of a prisoner in an observation cell provides the prisoner with a safe environment and enables the prison to focus on interventions to assist the prisoner. The regime should permit and encourage the on-going communication with supportive family and friends.
- 7.3 Subject to the need to balance issues such as workload, staffing availability and prison routines, the routine of a prisoner in an observation or medical observation cell should equate as much as is possible to normal management routine.

8. Notification of placement

- 8.1 Where a prisoner is placed in observation/medical observation the superintendent will where practicable, immediately notify the prisoner's family or significant others of the placement, if the prisoner so requests.

9. Records management

- 9.1 Details of all placements in observation/medical observation cells, including reasons for such placement, are to be recorded in TOMS by completing the relevant Regime in accordance with [Appendix 1 - Regime/Access to Facilities](#) in relation to each particular prisoner.
- 9.2 The superintendent must endorse each item in the regime for which the superintendent has exercised his/her discretion.
- 9.3 Each prisoner placed in an Observation or Medical Observation Cell and all relevant Officers must receive a copy of the regime for that prisoner.
- 9.4 Upon completion of the placement in an Observation or Medical Observation cell, the regime shall be placed on the prisoner's Prison Management File.

9.5 Notification of each placement is to be made as soon as practicable to the designated Superintendent or, in the case of privately operated prisons, to the Assistant Director Residential Assistant Director Residential (or equivalent position).

10. Reporting

All placements under this policy shall be subject to a report each three months by the ASO or ADR (as appropriate) to the ACCO.

11. Appendices

[Appendix 1 - Regime/Access to Facilities](#)

The Deputy Commissioner Adult Custodial may update the supporting appendices to this policy as required.

12. Policy review

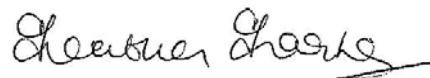
This policy is to be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

13. Approved

Commissioner:

Heather Harker

Signature:



Date: 16 August 2013

14. Policy sponsor

Assistant Commissioner Custodial Operations

15. Contact person

The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

- Principal Operational Policy Officer.

16. Version history

Version	Approved	Effective from
1	First published	14 May 2001
2	Amended	9 September 2013