



NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Secretary
Alisha Tafoya Lucero

CD-172800 Inmate Assistants	Issued: 05/16/16 Effective: 05/16/16	Reviewed: 5/27/26 Revised: 07/05/23
Alisha Tafoya Lucero, Cabinet Secretary		<i>Original Signed and Kept on File</i>

AUTHORITY:

- A. NMSA 1978, Section 33-1-6 and 14-2-1
- B. Policy CD-010100
- C. Policy CD-170000

REFERENCE:

- A. Louisiana Department of Corrections Policies
- B. Mississippi Department of Corrections Policies
- C. ACA Standard 5-ACI-6B-12, *Performance Based Standards and Expected Practices for Adult Correctional Institution*, 5th Edition
- D. Policy CD-172900

PURPOSE:

- A. To establish guidelines for inmates to provide services to other inmates who are suicidal, or who need companionship while housed in an Elevated Needs Unit.
- B. To provide an opportunity for inmates to learn and build empathy and compassion skills.

APPLICABILITY:

All New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) Staff and Inmates, particularly those assigned to Elevated Needs Units (ENU).

FORMS:

- A. **Suicide Watch Log** form (CD-180109.4)

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. **Inmate Observer (IO) Program Agreement** Attachment (CD-172801.A)
- B. **Inmate Companion (IC) Confidentiality Agreement** Attachment (CD-172802.A)

DEFINITIONS:

- A. Classification Committee: For purposes of this policy:

1. At facilities/units with Unit Management the Classification Committee shall be composed of the Unit Manager or Classification Supervisor as well as a security representative, Sergeant or above.
If a Unit Manager or Classification Supervisor is not available; a classification officer with over one year of experience in classification may serve on the Classification Committee as acting Classification Supervisor. If a Sergeant or above is not available, a Correctional Officer may serve as acting Sergeant.
 2. At facilities without Unit Management, the Classification Committee shall be composed of the Classification Supervisor as well as a security representative, Sergeant or above.
- B. Confidential Information: Records pertaining to physical or mental examinations and mental treatment of persons confined to any institution and grievances or other matters under investigation (regarding inmates).
- C. Inmate Assistants: Inmate assigned to assist with 24-hour one-on-one watches, or within the ENU.
1. Inmate Observer (IO) Role: Provides around the clock observation of potentially suicidal inmates.
 2. Inmate Companion (IC): Provides companionship to inmates assigned to the Elevated Needs Unit, inmates who are in a wheelchair, walker or need other assistance as deemed necessary by medical and to perform other duties as assigned.
- D. Unit Management Team: The staff and employees assigned responsibilities within the unit, including treatment, security, programs and support staff that work together to perform the essential functions of the unit, fostering communication, team work and cooperation within the prison.
- E. Unit Manager: The supervisor of the housing units who is responsible for overseeing the daily operation of the unit and the unit management team. The Unit Manager must have the capability to make operational decisions, supervise all levels of staff up to, and including, captains, and acts in the capacity of a department head in the facility.

POLICY:

- A. Inmates should be given opportunities to assist one another to build empathy, compassion, and other values that can assist with recidivism reduction and successful re-entry.
- B. Inmates will not be used to watch inmates that are on restraint beds.

- C. Inmates will not be used in areas that will compromise the security of the institution, as determined by the Warden.
- D. Unless prohibited by state law, offenders (under staff supervision) may perform familial duties commensurate with their level of training. These duties may include: **[5-ACI-6B-12]**
- Providing peer support and education
 - Performing hospice activities
 - Assisting impaired offenders on a one-on-one basis with activities of daily living
 - Serving as a suicide companion or buddy if qualified and trained through a formal program that is part of a suicide-prevention plan.
- E. At the discretion of the Unit Management Team or designee and recommendation by facility staff, any IC program participant may be removed from the program. Removal of a program participant shall be documented in the records kept by the Unit Manager. The inmate will be referred to OMS by the Classification Committee, for placement in another facility if deemed necessary by the Unit Management Team.
- F. Program participants in the Observer Role may be removed from watch immediately by any staff member that observes the IO exhibiting any unethical or inappropriate behavior, and will be referred to the Unit Manager for removal by the Classification Committee.



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CD-172801 Inmate Companion Observer Role	Issued: 05/16/16 Effective: 05/16/16	Reviewed: 5/27/26 Revised: 05/16/16
Alisha Tafoya Lucero, Cabinet Secretary		<i>Original Signed and Kept on File</i>

AUTHORITY:

Policy: CD-172800

PROCEDURES:

A. Selection of Inmate Observers (IO)

Because of the sensitive nature of such assignments, the selection of IOs requires considerable care. To provide around-the-clock observation of potentially suicidal inmates, a sufficient number of IOs will be trained, and alternate candidates will be available. IOs shall be selected based upon their ability to perform the specific tasks. As part of the screening process, the Unit Management Team shall select individuals who are:

- Mature, reliable and have credibility with both staff and inmates;
- Able to protect the suicidal inmate's privacy from other inmates, while being accepted in the role by staff;
- Able to perform their duties with minimal need for direct supervision.

Candidates must also meet the following criteria in order to be accepted into the program:

- Have not been found to have committed or found guilty of any major disciplinary offense(s) within the last twelve (12) months;
- Have not been found to have committed or found guilty of any minor disciplinary offense(s) within the last six (6) months;
- Have not had any suicide attempts or acts of self mutilation within the last 10 years;
- Do not have any Mental Health or Medical restrictions which would preclude them from performing their duties;
- No institutional violence in last 10 years;
- No drug reports in the last 2 years;
- No PREA incident involvement in the last 10 years as a suspect;
- No sexual misconduct history while incarcerated;
- No Security Threat Group affiliates;
- Must be within custody levels 1-3 (Minimum-to Medium Security); and
- Inmate must submit to urinalysis prior to final selection.

- If inmate receives a misconduct report during programming, it will be reviewed by UMT on a case by case basis for removal from IO position.

B. IO Training

1. There shall be a written training plan developed by Security, the Education Department, and the Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Bureau. The written training plan will be approved by the Director of Adult Prisons.
2. Each IO participant shall receive at least four (4) hours of initial training prior to being assigned to an IO shift, or as determined by the training group.
3. Training will include the following:
 - a. The location of constant watch areas;
 - b. Summoning staff during the shift;
 - c. Recognizing behavioral signs of stress or agitation; and
 - d. Recording observations in the Suicide Watch Log.
 - e. Each IO shall also receive quarterly refresher training. Each training session shall include a review of policy requirements and instruct program participants on their duties and responsibilities during a suicide watch.

C. IO Agreement

An agreement titled “**Inmate Observer (IO) Program Agreement** Attachment (CD-172801.A)” shall be developed as outlined in paragraph I. below. The Unit Manager shall review this agreement with each IO program participant. A completed agreement shall be signed by the Unit Manager and the IO program participant acknowledging that they have received, read and understood the conditions set forth in the agreement.

D. IO Oversight and Supervision

- IOs shall meet with the Unit Manager or designees, on an as needed basis discusses issues and identify potential program changes.
- IO will meet formally on a quarterly basis with the Unit Manager to review procedures, supplemental training and any concerns with the program.
- In no case shall an IO be assigned to a watch without adequate provision for staff supervision or without the ability to obtain immediate staff assistance. When an IO alerts staff to an emergency situation, staff shall immediately respond to the suicide watch cell and take necessary action to prevent the inmate on watch from incurring debilitating injury or death.
- Although IOs are selected on the basis of their emotional stability, maturity, and responsibility, the following level of staff supervision shall be provided while an IO performs a constant watch:
 1. Indirect supervision by staff members within special quarters with continuous observation of the inmate and observer.

2. Supervision shall consist of staff in-person checks of both the IO and the observed inmate at least every 30 minutes. Staff shall initial the Suicide Watch log (CD-180109.4) upon conducting checks and annotate their observations in the suicide watch log.

E. **IO Shifts**

IOs ordinarily shall work an 8-hour shift. Except under unusual circumstances, IOs shall not work longer than an 8-hour shift in any 24 hour period. Inmates must have two days off in a 7 day period.

F. **IO Records**

The Unit Manager shall maintain a file which contains the following information:

- The “Inmate Observer (IO) Program Position Description, Standards, and Orientation Agreement of Understanding and Expectation” form signed by each IO program participant;
- Documentation of attendance and topics discussed at training meetings;
- Lists of inmates available to serve as IO’s;
- Documentation of the removal of an IO program participant;
- Inmate Time Sheets;
- Inmate Application.

G. **Earned Good time and Wages**

IO program participants are eligible for good time and wages, as outlined in policy CD-100700 Inmate Labor and Compensation System.

H. **Inmate Time Sheets**

Inmate time sheets will be maintained by the Unit Officer, who will forward a copy to the Unit Manager.

I. **Job Description, Duties and Responsibilities for IO Program**

IO program participants shall be required to review and sign the **Inmate Observer (IO) Program Agreement** Attachment (*CD-172801.A*) which shall contain the following:

- Introduction: The introduction shall cover that the position of an IO program participant assigned to the IO program includes important responsibilities and duties, which include all IOs receiving specific training.
- Major Duties and Responsibilities:
 - a. The most important duty assigned to the IO program concerns the observation of inmates placed on Suicide Risk (SR) status. IOs who are fatigued, ill or emotionally distressed, should inform the appropriate staff and be excused from their watch until their condition improves.

- b. IOs shall position themselves directly outside of the SR inmate's cell with a clear line of vision to all of the inmate's actions through the observation window. Inmates in SR shall be under constant observation ("eyes on") by either an IO or a staff member. Reading, listening to radios, or any use of headphones is not permitted when conducting a suicide watch. (Staff, rather than IOs shall observe showers and toileting.) IOs should serve no more than eight (8) hours on watch.
- c. IOs shall be responsible for observing and documenting the behaviors of SR inmates, noting any changes and making regular, 15-minute entries on the **Suicide Watch Log** form (*CD-180109.4*). The log will be turned in at the end-of-shift into to the shift supervisor. Significant changes in behavior shall be closely monitored and immediately reported to staff. IOs shall log and pass on all pertinent information to the Shift or Unit Supervisor, SR inmate's clinician and their IO program relief.
- d. As confidentiality is of utmost concern, IOs shall respect confidentiality and will not disclose any information regarding their watch/shift to any person not involved in the program.
- e. IOs shall follow all policies and procedures as outlined during training and in this position description. IOs shall not have physical contact with or pass items to SR inmates. When SR inmates require food, clothing or other items, it shall be reported to the Unit Officer. It is the Unit Officer's responsibility to give the SR inmate their food and any other items allowed.
- f. Working as an IO can be very difficult at times. Inmates suffering from mental illness can be loud, demanding, and insulting. IOs are expected to speak to security staff and behavioral health staff, if available, when confronted with these types of difficult behaviors. IOs shall not taunt, make fun of, or become involved in verbal arguments, with SR inmates. If the SR inmate reacts negatively to being observed by an IO, the IO shall notify the Unit Officer and the Shift Supervisor or Unit Manager shall excuse the IO from watch. IOs shall log such incidents after reporting them to staff.
- g. If an IO witnesses a critical incident, the IO will be debriefed and evaluated by Behavioral Health Staff.

J. **Safety and Personal Appearance**

- IOs shall report to the Officer and log any unsafe condition, equipment, or material, or accident, injury or evidence of impaired health, observed during their shift.
- In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the unit, IOs shall follow the direction of staff. IOs shall be familiar with the location of the emergency exits in the area of their watch.
- IOs shall comply with institutional dress code and report for duty in full uniform or the uniform required.
- Restroom (or other) breaks are authorized as long as coordinated with security staff to ensure there is no break in the supervision of a SR inmate.

K. **Job Controls**

1. IOs shall not enter the SR inmate's cell. The SR's meals and medications shall be provided to them by the appropriate staff (in accordance with CD-150900 Food Service Procedures and CD-170000 Medical Services administration). The shift supervisor will be notified prior to an IOs absence (due to illness or other excused absence) to ensure that another IO can cover that particular watch/shift.
2. Each IO shall sign in and out of the Time Sheets binder (maintained in the housing unit) and is responsible for having the current staff member initial the hours worked.
3. Regularly scheduled meetings, at least quarterly shall be held with pertinent staff to review procedures, discuss issues, and supplement training. As IOs will occasionally need to be replaced (due to release, etc.) Unit Managers shall submit new IO program candidate names and will maintain a waiting list.
4. If security determines an IO is not properly and adequately performing their duties, the IO may be removed from the position temporarily or permanently as determined by Unit Management Team.
5. The supervising officer has the obligation to immediately remove any IO who is improperly observing or interacting with a SR inmate. The officer must report action to immediate supervisor and documentation forwarded to the Unit Management Team.

NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT
Inmate Observer (IO) Program Agreement

Introduction:

1. Important responsibilities and duties in the role of an Inmate Observer.
2. Opportunity to build compassion and empathy for others.
3. Characteristics of an Inmate Observer: reliable, sincere, truthful, honest.

Responsibilities and Duties

1. The responsibilities and duties of an Inmate Observer can become stressful at times. If at any time you feel fatigued, ill or emotionally distressed, you must notify a staff member immediately, so that you may be excused.
2. Reading, listening to radios, or any use of headphones is not permitted.
3. Observe and document behavior of other inmates placed on Suicide Risk.
4. Immediately report to staff any changes in behavior of the individual you are observing.
5. Maintain confidentiality of the individuals under your observation.
6. Follow all policies and procedures outlined in training.
7. Maintain appropriate documentation of all observations.

Training

1. Each IO participant shall receive at least four (4) hours of initial training prior to being assigned to an IO shift, or as determined by the training group.
2. Training will include the following:
 - a. The location of constant watch areas;
 - b. Summoning staff during the shift;
 - c. Recognizing behavioral signs of stress or agitation; and
 - d. Recording observations in the Suicide Watch Log.
3. Each IO shall also receive quarterly refresher training.
 - a. Each training session shall include a review of policy requirements and instruct program participants on their duties and responsibilities during a suicide watch.

Inmate Observer Signature

Date

Unit Manager Signature

Date



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CD-172802 Inmate Companion Elevated Care Role	Issued: 05/16/16 Effective: 05/16/16	Reviewed: 5/27/26 Revised: 05/16/16
Alisha Tafoya Lucero, Cabinet Secretary		<i>Original Signed and Kept on File</i>

AUTHORITY:

Policy: CD-172800

PROCEDURES:

A. Selection of Inmate Companion (IC) to the Elevated Care Role

1. Because of the very sensitive nature of such assignment, the selection of IC's requires considerable care. To provide care and companionship to inmates with debilitating medical conditions, IC's should be trained, and alternate candidates should be available. IC's shall be selected based upon their ability to perform the specific tasks.
2. As part of the screening process the Unit Management Team shall select individuals who are:
 - a. Mature, reliable and have credibility with both staff and inmates;
 - b. Able to protect the Elevated Needs inmate's privacy from other inmates, while being accepted in the role by staff;
 - c. Able to perform their duties with minimal need for direct supervision.
3. Candidates must also meet the following criteria in order to be accepted into the program:
 - a. Have not been found to have committed or found guilty of any major or minor disciplinary offense(s) within the last six (6) months;
 - b. Had any suicide attempts or acts of self mutilation within the last 10 years;
 - c. Have any Mental Health or Medical restrictions which would preclude them from performing their duties;
 - d. No institutional violence in last 10 years;
 - e. No drug reports in the last 2 years;
 - f. No PREA incident involvement in the last 10 years as a suspect;
 - g. No sexual misconduct history while incarcerated;
 - h. No Security Threat Group affiliates;
 - i. Must be within Levels 1-3 (Minimum-to Medium Security);
 - j. Inmate must submit to Urinalysis prior to Final Selection;
 - k. No history of elderly abuse or Domestic Violence;
 - l. Must be physically fit and capable to assist inmates using wheelchairs, walkers etc.
 - m. If inmate receives a misconduct report during programming, it will be reviewed by UMT on a case by case basis for removal from IO position.

B. IC Training

1. The Director of Nursing (DON) will work with the Unit Manager in the design, implementation and supervision of Inmate Companion training, which will be consistent with that of a Certified Nursing Assistant to all approved Inmate Companions.
2. Prior to providing any care/services, all inmates assigned to a supportive living unit or designated special housing unit for patient care will complete the Inmate Companion training.

C. Use of Inmate Companions [4-4393]

Inmate Companions, under direct supervision by health care staff, may perform duties commensurate with their level of training as outlined in:

- Peer Support and education;
- Palliative care activities;
- Assisting impaired inmates on a one-on one basis with activities of daily living.

D. Restricted Duties [4-4393]

Inmate Companions will be under direct supervision by health care staff in a health services area. Offender companions will be prohibited from the following:

- Performing direct offender care services.
- Scheduling health care appointments
- Determining access of other offenders health care services
- Handling or having access to surgical instruments, syringes, needles, medication, or health records
- Operating diagnostic or therapeutic equipment
- Other areas as designated by the correctional health services administrator

E. Safety and Personal Appearance

1. IC's shall report to the unit staff any unsafe condition, equipment, or material, or accident, injury or evidence of impaired health, observed during their shift.
2. In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the unit, IC's shall follow the direction of staff. IC's shall be familiar with the location of the emergency exits in the area and will assist in the evacuation of the inmate they are assisting.
3. IC's shall comply with institutional dress code and report for duty in full institutional uniform.

F. IC Agreement:

The Inmate Companion will sign and date a **Inmate Companion (IC) Confidentiality Agreement** Attachment (*CD-172802.A*), acknowledging the receipt and understanding of training and abiding to the confidentiality of patient information. This form will be forwarded to the Unit Manager and will serve as the job description for the assigned offender.

G. IC Oversight and Supervision

1. ICs shall meet with the Unit Manager or designees, on an as needed basis discuss issues and identify potential program changes.
2. IC's will meet formally on a quarterly basis with the Unit Manager and the Director of Nursing or designee to review procedures, supplemental training and any concerns with the program.
3. During their daily duties, IC's will be under direct supervision of the housing unit medical staff and security.

H. IC Shifts

IC's ordinarily shall work a 10-hour shift. Except under unusual circumstances, IC's shall not work longer than a 10-hour shift in any 24 hour period. Inmates must have two days off.

I. Earned Good Time and wages

IC program participants are eligible for good time and wages, as outlined in policy CD-100700 Inmate Labor and Compensation System.

J. IC program participant Time Sheets

IC's time sheets will be maintained by the Unit Medical Staff.

K. Removal

At the discretion of the Director of Nursing, Unit Manager or designee and by recommendation of facility staff any IC program participant may be removed from IC program. A Classification Committee will be held for removal of an IC program participant. Documentation will be kept in the inmates' institutional file.

NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT
Inmate Companion (IC) Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality

1. Inmate companions shall not disclose any information which represents a matter of confidence or trust or any other information of such character that its disclosure or use would be contrary to the best interest of the Elevated Needs inmate.
2. Information concerning an Elevated Needs inmate's personal life, social history and private affairs is confidential information and shall not be the subject of casual conversation or gossip.

Use of Inmate Companions

Inmate Companions, under direct supervision by health care staff, may perform familial duties commensurate with their level of training as outlined in:

1. Peer Support and education;
2. Palliative care activities;
3. Assisting impaired inmates on a one-on one basis with activities of daily living.

Restricted Duties

Inmate Companions will be under direct supervision by health care staff in a health services area.

Inmate Companions will be prohibited from the following:

1. Performing direct offender care services.
2. Scheduling health care appointments
3. Determining access of other offenders health care services
4. Handling or having access to surgical instruments, syringes, needles, medication, or health records
5. Operating diagnostic or therapeutic equipment
6. Other areas as designated by the correctional health services administrator

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of Policy (CD-172800) and Procedure (CD-172802) and I further acknowledge that it is my responsibility to become familiar with this policy/procedure and recognize that violations may result in disciplinary action. If I have questions or if I do not understand any provision of this policy/procedure, I will ask an Elevated Needs Unit staff member.

Inmate Companion Signature

Date

Unit Manager Signature

Date