Iowa Department of Corrections

Data Download

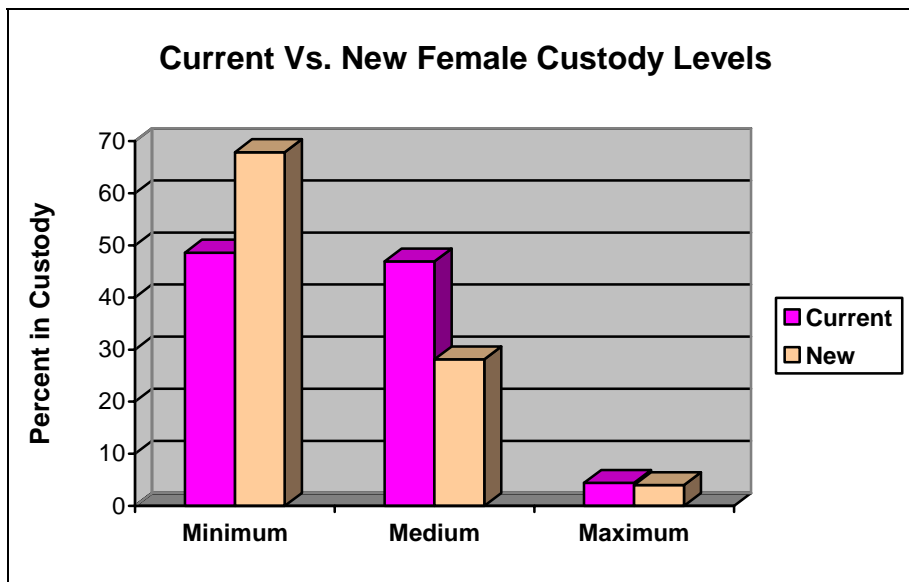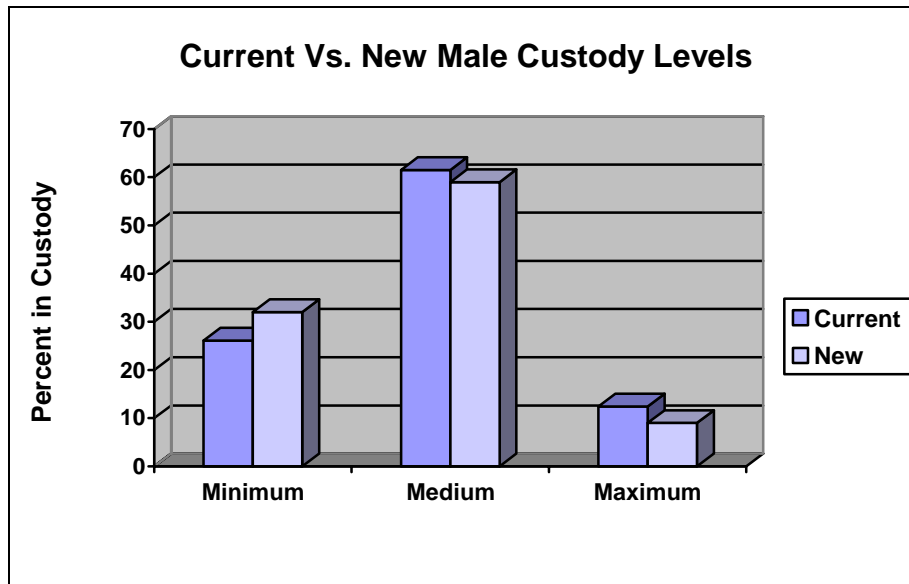## Inmate Custody Classification Study Brings Changes

As part of its 2006 systemic evaluation of DOC's facilities, operations and programming, the Durrant/PBA consulting group found several shortcomings with the Department's inmate custody classification system. Specifically, the consultants found that the system:

➢ lacked consistency in assessing offenders' risk levels;
➢ did not provide an accurate assessment of the risks to the security of the facility or safety of the offenders and staff;
➢ may over-classify women offenders;
➢ is labor intensive and time-consuming;
➢ did not allow for changes in offender classification as a result of behavior changes and program participation; and
➢ lacked consistency in manually overriding offender classification scores.

In 2007, Durrant contracted with the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI) to work with DOC staff in developing more accurate and gender responsive classification tools that identify changes in offender risk levels over time. After much work involving numerous DOC staff, CJI issued a report on March 28, 2008 which included recommendations for a new classification system that features a separate classification tool for female offenders, and accomplishes the following:

➢ places offenders in the least restrictive custody environment based on their behavior;
➢ improves staff and inmate safety;
➢ enhances accountability and order;
➢ provides equity and consistency in offender management;
➢ supports treatment, rehabilitation and reentry programming; and
➢ helps optimize resource allocation and planning efforts.

To gauge the effect that the new classification tools would have on DOC's prison population, they were applied to the prison population as of November 1, 2007:

Current Vs. New Male Custody Levels

Current Vs. New Female Custody Levels

As can be seen from the above charts, more of DOC's prison population – both male and female – could be properly classified as minimum security using the new tools.

DOC has approved the new custody classification instruments, and programming has begun to make these available on ICON. Over time, these efforts should improve offender rehabilitation, save resources, and – most importantly – enhance staff and offender safety.