

<b>GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS</b> <b>Standard Operating Procedures</b>		
<b>Policy Name:</b> Reentry Pre-and Post-Release Planning		
<b>Policy Number:</b> 503.02	<b>Effective Date:</b> 10/30/17	<b>Page Number:</b> 1 of 37
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**I. Introduction and Summary:**

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) will provide standardized Reentry Services Protocols (Transitional Services) that permeate all levels of affected agencies and organizations to reduce recidivism through collaborative partnerships supporting offender placement into evidence-based interventions. Offender reentry planning and preparation begins when the offender is initially received by the GDC and is an on-going and dynamic endeavor that continues through the offender's release from custody and transition to the community.

**II. Authority:**

- A. GDC Rules and Regulations: 125-4-1-.05, 125-4-1-.06, 125-3-1-.2.;
- B. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 214.03 Offender Request for a Vital Record, 222.07 Release Procedures for Offenders, 220.04 Offender Orientation, 211.06 In-House Transitional Center, 210.05 Inmate/Probationer Boot Camp, 220.07 Guidelines for Completing Parole Review Summary, 220.03 Classification Committee, 220.05 Diagnostics Reception, Orientation, and Processing, 220.01 Admissions/Computations, 215.18 Transitional Centers, 213.11 Detainee Classification, 213.03 Detainee Admissions, 222.08 Sex Offender Registration, 215.17 Transitional Center Resident Programs and Services, 107.11 Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Programs, 227.05 Visitation of Offenders, 107.04 Risk Needs Assessment, 409.05.01, Prison Industries Enhancement Program, 503.01 Faith and Character Based Initiatives, and 508.14 Mental Health Reception Screen; and
- C. ACA Standards: 2-CO-4G-01 and 4-4442.

**III. Definitions:**

- A. **Georgia Offender Alternative Learning (G.O.A.L)** - A GDC technology-based initiative focused on broadening the scope of educational opportunities offered to offenders. NOTE: Offenders are provided with personal electronic devices (*tablets*) in order to participate in this initiative.
- B. **Georgia Prisoner Reentry Initiative (GA-PRI)** - Georgia Department of Community Supervision:

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1. The fundamental goals of the DCS GA-PRI are to:
    - i. Promote public safety by reducing the threat of harm to persons, families and their property by citizens returning to their communities from prison; and
    - ii. Increase success rates of returning citizens who transition from prison by fostering effective, evidence-based risk and need management and treatment, returning citizen accountability, and safe family, community and victim participation.
  2. GA-PRI targets citizens returning to GA-PRI sites they have identified as their residence of record and who are classified as medium to high risk of reoffending. Participants must have a score of 5 or higher on Risk of New Felony Arrest on the Next Generation Assessment (NGA);
  3. GA-PRI will: establish pre-release connections and linkages with post-release referral services, coordinate with agencies that serve GA-PRI participants, and advocate on the local, state and federal level to eliminate barriers and fill gaps in services needed for GA-PRI participants to successfully reenter their community;
  4. GA-PRI is not an early release program, an expungement of criminal records program, free vehicles or transportation program, free housing program, or a program for any other promise that cannot be realistically fulfilled. Attempts to find needed resources will be made but no guarantee is given that all needs or wants may be addressed;
- C. **Inmate Career Resource Center** - Space and equipment located within GDC facilities, Career Resource Centers are staffed with inmates trained as *career clerks*. These centers contain resources used to build career/employment plans and prepare releasing inmates for meaningful employment;
- D. **Interest Profiler:** An occupational assessment instrument used to build a career plan leading to employment.

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E. **Next Generation Assessment (NGA)** - An automated, dynamic/real-time, statistically-based, actuarial assessment of offender risk, needs and responsivity (RNR), created for, and normed on the Georgia inmate and high-risk probation correctional population. The NGA is designed to assess key risk and criminogenic need factors for correctional populations. It is used for developing case plans for placement, supervision, and the case management of offenders;

1. The NGA, separate for males and females, produces objectively assessed risk, needs, and responsivity scores (scaled magnitudes of 1-10, least-to-greatest). The eight (8) need scales include: Criminal Thinking, Education, Employment, Peer and Family, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Trauma, and Motivation for Change.
2. The NGA interprets interplay between static risk factors and criminogenic needs (dynamic risk factors), producing a Risk/Needs/Responsivity (RNR) matrix which combines these scores into a single objective and “actionable” score. The NGA avoids the use of “guess-work” or “clinical judgement” in assessing offender needs, risk, responsivity and the evidence-based interventions/programs being applied.
3. Using this “actionable” score the NGA automatically and electronically identifies, and links offenders to GDC’s evidenced-based programs—only those needed—in order to effectively address the NGA’s findings regarding the specific offender.

F. **Pre-Release Planning Program (PRPP)** - A specialized program designed to assist HIV positive inmates with reentry services;

G. **Problem Residence Inmate (PRI)** - Problem resident inmates include those with special needs: sex offender, nursing home, assisted living, mental health, personal care homes, electronic monitoring, aging, and inmates that have passed their Tentative Parole Month (TPM) without a residence plan. Also see Residential Problem Housing, below;

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- H. **Reentry Needs** - Those issues specifically related to the offender's positive assimilation back into society, to include: identification, housing, employment, education, substance abuse, mental health, medical, cognitive programming, spiritual development, Veterans' benefits, transportation, disability benefits and service provider information and coordination (i.e. Department of Community Supervision, Veterans Affairs, Social Security, Department of Labor, connection with community resources and social services, pro-social community association and activities, etc.);
- I. **Residential Problem Housing (RPH)** - Inmates that have passed their tentative parole month (TPM) without a residence plan may qualify for consideration in the RPH Program. This program is a collaboration with the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Community Supervision and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles;
- J. **SCRIBE** - Georgia Department of Corrections enterprise data management system;
- K. **Specialized Probation Supervision (SPS) Officers** - Department of Community Supervision (DCS) Officers assigned to supervise sex offenders;
- L. **Supplement Security Income (SSI)** - TITLE XVI (16) A Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes). It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income; and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter;
- M. **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** - TITLE II (2) A federally run benefits program that provides aid to people who are unable to achieve gainful employment due to a permanent disabling condition;
- N. **SSI/SSDI Outreach Access Recovery (SOAR)** - A program designed to increase access to SSI/SSDI for eligible adults who are experiencing or are at

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risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance abuse disorder;

- . **System for Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE):** Measures vocational aptitude, cognitive and conceptual abilities, vocational interest inventory, work attitude, temperament factor assessment, learning styles and work ethics.
- P . **Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE):** Is a national assessment examination to determine individual adult academic achievement.
- Q . **Transitional Housing for Offender Reentry (THOR) Directory** - A listing of housing providers that have been approved by the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. It is found on the Parole website: [www.pap.ga.gov](http://www.pap.ga.gov) or DCS website: [www.DCS.ga.gov](http://www.DCS.ga.gov);
- R. **Vital Records** - for the purposes of this Standard Operating Procedure the term vital records will be defined in accordance with O.C.G.A. §31-10-1 and means certificates or reports of birth, death, marriage, divorce, dissolution of marriage, or annulment and data related thereto; and
- S. **The Offender, Parolee, and Probationer State Training Employment Program (TOPPSTEP)** - A collaborative commitment between the GDC, State Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Georgia Department of Labor to enhance community safety by the development and implementation of measures to improve the employability of offenders. See the link below: [http://dol.georgia.gov/sites/dol.georgia.gov/files/related\\_files/document/dol4448.pdf](http://dol.georgia.gov/sites/dol.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/dol4448.pdf).

**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

In order to support the process of offender reentry, the Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment (DW/CT) or Counseling Supervisor will have the responsibility to ensure compliance with the following procedures:

- A. Designated GDC staff will administer and complete appropriate and supportive classification instrument(s) to ensure that prescriptively designed,

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reentry case plans are developed and executed. Case planning elements include, but are not limited to:

1. Next Generation Assessment;
2. System for Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE);
3. Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE); and
4. Interest Profiler.

B. In-Prison Programs (a.k.a. Reentry initiatives): Once assigned to a permanent facility—staff will make reentry initiatives available to the offender. Appropriate staff will review and discuss the importance of offender participation in reentry programs, related activities, and working to complete the reentry case-plan.

C. Utilizing file information and the NGA product(s), staff will coordinate information and activities to ensure the reentry plan is comprehensive and subjective, giving the offender the best possible plan to assist in their successful transition and reintegration into the community. Variables for consideration include, but are not limited to:

1. Court ordered programming, such as:
  - i. Family violence
  - ii. Substance abuse treatment
  - iii. Sex Offender programming;
2. Medical Diagnosis;
3. Mental Health Evaluations;
4. Parole Pre-Conditions;

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- 5. Court-ordered Conditions of Probation; or
- 6. Selective Service registration or Status of Information Exemption.

**Note:** If not registered the offender may not be eligible to receive Federal financial assistance for education and job training.

- D. Staff shall complete the electronic Reentry Checklist, for all offenders, prior to release.
  - 1. In order to ensure statewide consistency, thoroughness, and accuracy the Reentry Checklist is found, and interactively completed, in SCRIBE.
  - 2. Reentry Checklist:
    - i. The reentry procedure and efforts to complete the checklist must begin as the offender enters GDC custody (i.e., diagnostics and classification).
    - ii. All relevant information shall be recorded on the checklist.
    - iii. This checklist is an interactive, comprehensive document or guide to follow while preparing an offender for release.
    - iv. Notations to the checklist shall be entered whenever the identified “activity/actions” are complete—thereby, NOT delaying a timely and comprehensive completion of the checklist.
    - v. The reentry checklist must be routinely reviewed by the offender’s current Case Manager; and, immediately reviewed by any newly assigned Case Manager, in order to:
      - a. Ensure the Case Manager’s continuing knowledge of all completed, and all incomplete checklist activity/actions item(s), and

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- b. To refresh the Case Manager’s awareness of, and responsibility to complete, a checklist activity/action i.e., required pre-release processes; a required document’s: application, acquisition, location, safekeeping; etc.
  
- 3. Reentry Checklist Instructions: Re-Entry Checklist “Instructions” are found in SCRIBE under each individual offender’s “RE-ENTRY PLAN” tab. See Attachment 1, Reentry Checklist Narrative: State Prisons, Transitional Centers and Attachment 2, Reentry Checklist Narrative, Department of Community Supervision for inter-agency perspective regarding post-release offender activities. A partial listing of Reentry Checklist tasks includes:
  - i DW/CT or Counseling Supervisor must ensure:
    - 1.) The inmate’s counselor emails the Department of Community Supervision (DCS) office, where the inmate is to report upon release, advising the office of the offender’s upcoming release date, **and** place notes into SCRIBE to confirm this activity.
    - 2.) The Attachment 3, DDS Residency Verification Form developed in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Driver Services, is explained to inmate. This form is on file with DCS, in order for the offender (upon release), to be able to promptly obtain a State ID or Driver’s License (whichever is applicable). **Note: The offender must NOT be given this form prior to release.** Inmate’s counselor shall record completion of this interaction with the offender in SCRIBE.
    - 3.) When an inmate’s post-release employment cannot be verified, the counselor shall document in SCRIBE on the reentry checklist the nearest Department of Labor Career Center. See: DOL website to obtain address of center:  
<http://dol.georgia.gov/locations/career-center>

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- 4.) Confirm:
  - 1.) The offender has received the State issued debit card, to include instructions for its use (Facility Business Office); and,
  - 2.) The receipt of this card has been recorded on the SCRIBE Reentry Checklist.
  
- E. There are a variety of specialized reentry initiatives available for the offender. The counselor/case manager will review prospective programs, make appropriate reentry related referrals, and work with offenders—preparing them for reentry. Staff shall recognize DCS/GA-PRI staff as participating and collaborative partners, who share offender release readiness and reentry responsibilities. The highest-ranking Care and Treatment staff member will be responsible for ensuring this component of the Reentry Process is completed according to policy. The following are some examples of reentry initiatives:
  1. Problem Residence Inmate (PRI):
    - i. Every effort shall be made to insure that offender residence plans are thoroughly reviewed and sufficient documentation is entered into SCRIBE.
    - ii. Twenty-four (24) months prior to release—the Counselor or Case Manager will question offenders on where they will live upon release. A primary residence plan will be established.
    - iii. Twelve (12) months prior to release—the Counselor or Case Manager will discuss the residence plan with the inmate and confirm residence has been identified.
    - iv. Three (3) to six (6) months prior to release—post-release housing MUST be confirmed.
    - v. One (1) month prior to release—the housing plan in place shall be discussed and the address again verified.

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- a. If the offender is being released upon his maximum release date (MRD), housing options **MUST** still be in place. The THOR directory or [www.GeorgiaHousingSearch.org](http://www.GeorgiaHousingSearch.org) is a good option to find housing for all offenders.
  - b. If the offender is being released under Parole supervision, the housing options chosen must be listed as approved sites in the THOR directory, by Parole.
  - c. If the offender is a registered sex offender, the housing must be approved by the DCS—SPS Officer in the supervising judicial circuit.
- vi. If all housing option efforts are exhausted and no other options remain, an offender shall be identified as a “problem residence inmate” and may be eligible for the RPH program. In order for an offender to be identified as a “problem residence inmate”, the following prerequisites must be met:
- a. All housing options including family, friends, employers etc. must have been submitted, and disapproved. This process must be documented on the SCRIBE Reentry Checklist.
  - b. All potential housing options identified in the THOR manual shall have been exhausted. This effort must be documented in SCRIBE.
  - c. There must be chronological documentation, on the SCRIBE Reentry Checklist, to support the “problem residence inmate” designation.
  - d. The offender must have more than ninety (90) days remaining before his sentence Maximum Release Date (MRD).

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- e. The institutional Problem Residence Review Committee is responsible for ensuring that staff is exploring all possible housing leads for offenders.
  - vi. All new housing options will be emailed to [Problem.Residence@pap.ga.gov](mailto:Problem.Residence@pap.ga.gov)
  - vii. The DW/CT or Counseling Supervisor shall ensure that each Case Manager is actively working with offenders to resolve housing issues.
  - viii. The Warden will receive a written copy from the Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment, the problem solving file review, attachment 4, and flow chart for release processing, attachment 5 on a monthly basis for review.
2. Faith and Character Based Prisons and Dorms: Offenders may volunteer to be assigned to these specially designated living units. The units are housed within a facility, or may utilize the entire prison.
    - i. The programming associated with the Faith and Character Based initiative provides a pro-social, programmatic environment for change, for those offenders who voluntarily request to participate in the program.
    - ii. These housing units foster moral and character development while cultivating pluralistic spiritual enrichment.
  3. Evidence Based Prison Learning Site: Offenders may volunteer to be screened for and subsequently recommended to participate in a learning environment that implements evidence-based principles. The learning environment shall educate, train and teach the inmate skills designed to reduce recidivism.
  4. Transitional Centers: Up to twenty-four (24) months prior to an offender's release date, they are to be screened to see if they are appropriate for GDC Transitional Center program placement.

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5. Reentry Skills Building Curriculum: It is the responsibility of the Classification Committee to ensure that all offenders complete the Reentry Skills Building Curriculum within one (1) year of their PIC, TPM or MRD. See: SCRIBE, Reentry Skills-Building Handbook. **Note: All offenders must be enrolled in this curriculum.**
  - i. The Reentry Skills Building Handbook and Resource List (<http://captive.dcor.state.ga.us/pdf/Reentry.pdf>) will be found within or placed within the offender's G.O.A.L. device.
    - a. Those who do not have a G.O.A.L. device need to receive a paper copy of the Handbook and Resource List during the class; however, if not received in class, then upon release.
  - ii. Offenders in prison must complete this program in a 12-module format.
  - iii. Once completed, the offender should receive a Certificate of Recognition (local facility issued).
6. Fatherhood Program: This voluntary program is available to the offender and is offered through the Department of Human Services/Office of Child Support Services (see also <http://dcss.dhs.georgia.gov/>) The offender will have the opportunity to have a DNA test to acknowledge paternity.
  - i. Offenders may also participate in other Fatherhood initiatives available through the Department of Labor, local technical schools and community service providers.
  - ii. These programs assist all parents with job training, gaining back a driver's license and managing overdue child support payments.
  - iii. Contact information for these programs is available in the Reentry Handbook.

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- iv. Offered through the Department of Human Services/Office of Child Support Services to offenders in Transitional Centers.
7. Career Resource Centers: Inmate Career Resource Centers are located within GDC facilities and are staffed with offenders who are trained as “career clerks”. These centers contain resources used to build career employment plans and prepare releasing inmates for meaningful community employment. Resources include:
- i. The “Interest Profiler”;
  - ii. Resume’ writing;
  - iii. Typing skills;
  - iv. Interview skills;
  - v. Driver’s Manual (also available in the library);
  - vi. Fatherhood Program information; and
  - vii. Other areas related to job and career growth.
- F. The Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) and GDC: Working collaboratively with GDC, DDS will issue a State Identification Card, or renew an existing Georgia Driver’s License for offenders deemed as eligible and qualified for ID or DL issue, prior to their release.
- 1. Designated facility staff shall assist offenders to properly apply and qualify for these documents.
  - 2. GDC Transitional Services should be contacted for information and assistance.
- G. TOPPSTEP-The Offender, Parolee, and Probationer State Training Employment Program: An inmate eligible to participate in the TOPPSTEP program shall have an envelope with the attachment 6 (TOPPSTEP checklist)

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attached to the front cover of the envelope. All supporting documents outlined in this policy shall be included in the envelope and the envelope will become the TOPPSTEP package. The TOPPSTEP package shall be boldly marked TOPPSTEP package on the outer envelope and placed in the institutional file.

1. Diagnostic Facilities: Requirements for offenders undergoing initial diagnostic processing and/or assigned to a diagnostic facility:
  - i. Applications for certified Birth Certificates, Social Security Cards, DDS ID/DL and completion of the JDP are not to be pursued unless requested by the administration.
  - ii. For regular parolees and Max-outs with probation supervision to follow, a TOPPSTEP cover memo (originated by the facility, and accompanying the Checklist) will indicate release from diagnostics as the reason a package has not been completed.
    - 1.) Diagnostic inmates released on Supervised Reprieves or Conditional Transfers, are not targeted for the TOPPSTEP process.
    - 2.) Requirements of this SOP are applicable to permanent inmates housed at diagnostic facilities.
2. Permanent Facilities: Once the inmate is assigned to a Counselor/Case Manager the TOPPSTEP process will begin.
  - i. Admissions and Orientation (A/O) Functions: During the A/O Process, Counselor(s) will review the institutional files and SCRIBE, Offender Documents, Reentry Documents of new arrivals to determine the status of TOPPSTEP information. Their findings will be documented on the Reentry Checklist, along with any necessary comments.

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- a. The TOPPSTEP envelope and checklist is to be incorporated in the file.
  - 1) When new arrivals have yet to complete applications for Birth Certificates and DDS ID/DL the A/O Process will allow allotted for the inmates to complete the documents the Birth Certificate and application for DDS,
  - 2) After review for completeness and legibility, the A/O Counselor will present the Birth Certificate applications for processing via email.
- ii. Instructions for sending/processing DDS ID and Driver's Licensees shall be provided by GDC Transitional Services, dependent upon current DDS requirements.
3. All offenders will be reviewed for the TOPPSTEP process:
  - i. Facility staff shall administer and participate with offenders in the TOPPSTEP initiative.
  - ii. The TOPPSTEP initiative enhances the employment potential of all eligible offenders by obtaining Social Security Cards and certified copies of Birth Certificates; Department of Driver Services Identification cards and Drivers Licenses, and, assisting offenders to prepare their Job Development Package/Resume'.
  - iii. In addition, resume's and other documents created in Career Resource Centers will be a part of the TOPPSTEP packet, as well as other government documentation such as, but no limited to, Selective Service Cards and Status of Information letters; and DD-214's. For DD-214 see: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>

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- iv. Documentation will be made on the checklist if the process is NOT completed due to exceptions outlined in this policy.
  - v. The only offenders excluded from the TOPPSTEP process include those with INS detainers, inmates under death sentence (UDS) and inmates serving sentences of Life Without Parole.
4. TOPPSTEP is to be implemented in all facilities:
- i. Counselors/Case Managers are responsible for:
    - 1.) Applications for birth certificates, social security cards, DDS identification card or driver's license, as well as completion and accuracy of the JDP.
    - 2.) The on-going review of their caseload for the TOPPSTEP process compliance.
    - 3) This review includes comprehensive follow-up, adherence to timelines, review for accuracy and quality of work, documentation of significant occurrences regarding the status of TOPPSTEP Checklists, and Attachment 7, Job Development Package (JDP).
  - ii. DW/CT or Counseling Supervisor is responsible to see that staff monitor the quality, accuracy, timeliness and completion of offender applications for Social Security Cards; Birth Certificates; Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) Identification Cards/Driver's License renewals; and, Job Development Packages.
    - 1) Every effort is to be made to ensure that these documents are applied for and received in a timely manner.
    - 2) Upon receipt, these documents shall be scanned and appropriately and securely stored.

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- 3) When a document(s) is received at Central Office, it shall be scanned and securely stored (at Central Office Repository (see, IV., N., below) until the offender is within 120 days of release; thereupon, it shall will be sent to the releasing facility.
- iii. Each Warden/Superintendent (if not using the DW/CT or Counseling Supervisor) will appoint a designee for the purpose of performing a final review of all TOPPSTEP Packages prior to the release of offenders.
- iv. The designee's review will ascertain the status of each package to include a determination that:
- a. The required steps in the process have been completed, documented;
  - b. The quality of the *Job Development Package* and resume' (if prepared) is acceptable; and
  - c. The status of the entire TOPPSTEP Package is being accurately conveyed for the receiving Department of Community Supervision Office.
  - d. Instances of noncompliance will be reported to the Warden/Superintendent.
- Note:** The designee will document the advent (and findings) of their review on the TOPPSTEP Checklist within the Offender's SCRIBE Case notes.
- v. Forwarding document(s):
- a. Each facility will be responsible for developing, documenting and maintaining a process to evidence that documents (i.e., Birth Certificates, Social Security Cards, DDS Identification Card/Driver's License, etc.) received after an offender's transfer

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to another facility have been forwarded to the offender's then-current (new) location. SCRIBE Reentry Checklist shall be documented so as to attest to the receipt and transfer of these documents.

vi. Upon release the Georgia Department of Labor will assist offenders at their DOL Career Centers, with:

- a. Workshops, computer and internet access, printers/copiers/fax machines, literature, resume' reviews, job and community resource referrals, unemployment insurance, etc.
- b. The DOL website will (upon access) provide additional information, see:

<https://dol.georgia.gov/>

5. TOPPSTEP Job Development Package (JDP):

- i. Completion of the Job Development Package is required for all TOPPSTEP participants.
  - a. Mental Health Level III and Level IV inmates may complete the Job Development Package and may attend the Pre-Release Group, if appropriate.
- ii. Offenders (General Population and Mental Health) who are eligible for Supplemental Income (SSI) may complete the SSI Package with the assistance of the assigned counselor. (see SSI information below)
- iii. When an inmate is within six (6) months of a PIC date, TPM, or Maximum Release Date the designated staff will schedule the inmate to complete and/or finalize the JDP.
  - a. The completed JDP must be:

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- 1) reviewed and updated to reflect certificates earned prior to release; and
  - 2) the update must be noted on the checklist to reflect the six (6) month from release timeline, or, in the case of centers, two (2) weeks.
- iv. The Counselor/Case Manager will:
- a. Review the JDP for accuracy and completeness;
  - b. Place the reviewed JDP in the TOPPSTEP envelope; and
  - c. Document the TOPPSTEP envelope and Reentry Checklist.
6. TOPPSTEP Checklist:
- i. A TOPPSTEP Checklist will be established and maintained in each offender's administrative file.
    - a. The Checklist(s) will accurately reflect the status of TOPPSTEP and will fully document the status of each item, to include accurate entry dates and appropriate comments.
    - b. The Checklist(s) will be placed **on** the TOPPSTEP envelope—and, the envelope should be affixed in files so that the contents are easily accessible for review and maintained, as follows:
      - 1) State and Private Prisons, County Prisons, Transitional Centers, and Parole Revocation Centers: bottom left side
      - 2) Probation Detention Centers: bottom right side (2-sided files).
  - ii. Refusal to participate:
    - a. Refusal forms are no longer accepted, and should not be documented in SCRIBE on the Reentry Checklist.

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- b. Refusals should be reviewed yearly and the offender given an opportunity to reconsider participation.
  
- 7. Three (3) months prior to earliest release date the Counselor/Case Manager shall be responsible for performing a final check to determine completion of all the TOPPSTEP documents.
  - i. If the Birth Certificate, SS card or DDS ID/DL applications have not already been requested they must be initiated at this time.
  
- 8. RELEASE and Distribution of TOPPSTEP packages:
  - i. At release, offenders are to be provided with the contents (original documents) of their TOPPSTEP package. Staff shall explain to the offender the value of each document as it relates to the offender’s transitioning to the community; and, the importance of safely maintaining these documents.
  - ii. Copies of all TOPPSTEP Packages (including “TOPPSTEP Checklist”) are to be maintained in release files.
  - iii. Also see Attachment 2, GDC Offender Release Checklist Form, SOP 222.07 Release Procedures for Offenders: This form must not to be confused with the SCRIBE Reentry Checklist or Reentry Skills Building Handbook)
  
- 9. Birth Certificates acquisition:
  - i. Georgia born offenders:
    - a. GDC shares a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Georgia Department of Public Health, State Office of Vital Records.
      - 1) Applications for, or inquiries regarding the status of, certified copies of Georgia Birth Certificates should be submitted to the Georgia Vital Records Office at the following link:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/VitalRecords>

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- 2) See Attachment 1, Request for Certified Copy of a Vital Record, SOP 214.03 Inmate and Probationer Request of Vital Records.
- b. Birth certificate applications shall be submitted when the offender begins incarceration.
    - 1) NOTE: Prior to sending a Birth Certificate request to Vital Records the offender's SCRIBE Reentry Checklist shall reviewed to ensure that a Birth Certificate has not previously been received by GDC.
    - 2) There is no charge to the offender for a Georgia birth certificate
  - c. Counselors will review unprocessed offender applications returned by Vital Records—due to unconfirmed information, or information found not to be on file.
    - 1) Counselors will re-interview these offenders and resubmit corrected applications, if at all possible.
  - d. Offender files will be checked for a birth certificates no later than three (3) months from the offender's earliest release date (PIC, TPM, MRD).
  - e. NOTE—Proof of: identity, citizenship and date of birth are required by the Georgia Department of Driver Services to establish/issue a DDS SECURE ID (Federal REAL ID) for the purpose(s) of receiving a DDS Identification Card and/or Georgia Driver's License renewal. These requirements are satisfied by obtaining a certified copy of the Birth Certificate.
- ii. Offenders born outside of Georgia:
    - a. Offenders born outside of Georgia should be encouraged to apply for a certified copy of their birth certificate.

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- 1.) These requests are NOT to be sent to, or through Georgia Vital Records;
  - 2.) State funding is not available for birth certificates requested from other states/nations;
  - 3.) A completed out-of-state birth certificate application shall be maintained in the offender's TOPPSTEP file, whether the offender applies for an out-of-state birth certificate, or not;
  - 4.) The offender's decision not to pursue acquisition of an out-of-state birth certificate is not to be considered as a refusal to participate in the TOPPSTEP process; and
  - 5.) Facilities shall maintain state-by-state information to include: Vital Records Office addresses and access to current vital records application forms.
- iii. Offender SCRIBE Reentry Checklist and TOPPSTEP files shall describe the current progress toward obtaining the offender's birth certificate
10. Social Security Card (duplicate) replacement:
- i. GDC shares a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Social Security Administration.
  - ii. Applications are accepted for offenders who meet at least one of the applicable circumstances:
    - a. Will be released within 120 days;
    - b. Participating in a reentry work release or school program; or
    - c. Will be released to a Transitional Center or Work Release within 120 days.

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- iii. All facilities are to comply with the requirements of this MOU regarding the processing of applications for duplicate Social Security (SS) Cards for offenders. A copy of the MOU may be obtained from GDC, Inmate Services, Transitional Services Unit, or local Social Security office.
- iv. Applications for SS Cards may only be submitted in the name under which the offender has been sentenced.
  - a. In cases where the incarcerated name and true name are different, an application is not to be submitted.
  - b. These cases will be documented on the TOPPSTEP Checklist and SCRIBE Reentry Checklist to communicate why an SS Card is not part of the inmate's TOPPSTEP Package.
- v. The Certification of Prison Records Form must be:
  - a. Completed and documented with each social security application
  - b. Completed by the counseling staff only—the inmate cannot complete this form.

- 1.) See the Social Security website for the current form:  
<https://faq.ssa.gov/link/portal/34011/34019/article/3755/how-do-i-apply-for-a-new-or-replacement-social-security-number-card>

U.S. Selective Service Registration: All offenders who are ages 18-25 shall be registered for Selective Service. This includes ALL offenders, no matter of their crime or residency status.

- 11. The process is to be completed on-line at Selective Service website at [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov)

**Note: The mail-in procedure should only be used to register those offenders as directed by Selective Service.**

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12. The Counselor/Case Manager and/or Reentry Specialist are responsible for ensuring that all offenders born after December 31, 1959 submit a Status of Information Letter which is available on the Selective Service web site. This letter will allow the offender to possibly receive an exemption from registering. It is important to be very specific when filling out this paperwork and attaching the supportive documentation.

13. The offender may use the prison as their address.

14. The registration card or copy of the Status of Information Letter should be placed in the offender's TOPPSTEP envelope and the information recorded on the offender's SCRIBE Reentry Checklist.

**H. Sex Offender Psycho-Educational Program (SOPP):**

1. An offender will be placed into this program when they have one of the following:

i. Three (3) years from MRD, TPM or PIC date

ii. Special request from Board of Pardons and Paroles

iii. Special request from the Sex Offender Registration Board

iv. Recommendation by the facility classification committee after they have served more than 75% of their current sentence, or have served at least 20 years on a life sentence.

2. DW/CT, Counseling Supervisor, or facility sex offender point-of-contact must complete the Sex Offender registration process for all sex offenders releasing from prison to community supervision—that are required to register. See GDC SOP 222.08, Sex Offender Registration.

**I. The DW/CT, Counseling Supervisor or designated staff must ensure that:**

1. All available external resources in support of reentry are pursued;

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2. Individual and organizational contacts are established; and
3. Application documents for support services are complete.
  - i. These items are part of the GDC and DCS commitment to facilitate a successful transition from correctional supervision back into the community.
  - ii. Various documents critical to the reentry process may be found in the offender's local facility institutional file, OR may be secured within the *GDC Documents Repository*.
    - a. Email contact with the GDC Repository shall be made using the address: [gdc.repository@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:gdc.repository@gdc.ga.gov); (this is the preferred method) or
    - b. Postal address: GDC Documents Repository, Transitional Services, 300 Patrol Road, Forsyth, Ga., 31029.

**Note:** The offender's Reentry Checklist should be reviewed to determine the existence and/or location of a document.
4. Examples of offender documents found at their resident facility or within the GDC Repository (though not exhaustive), include:
  - i. TOPPSTEP envelope containing:
    - a. Social Security Card;
    - b. Birth Certificate;
    - c. Georgia Department of Driver Services Identification Card or Driver's License;
    - d. Educational/Vocational certificates of completion and earned skilled-trade credentials; and
    - e. Resume' Paper copy.

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- ii. Selective Service Registration Card or Status Information Letter;
- iii. Department of Defense form DD-214 (veteran's separation from service document);
- iv. Job Development Package;
- v. Supplement Security Income (SSI) documents;
- vi. Medicaid documents;
- vii. Veteran's benefit documents;
- viii. Electronic copy of all Career Resource Center work.

**Recommendation: A copy of the resume' and all Career Resource Center work should be put on an electronic external storage device (flash drive, G.O.A.L. device, etc.), and given to the offender upon release.**

- 5. Community Reentry Assistance opportunities, upon release:
  - i. Identified Faith Based Organizations;
  - ii. Job Leads and/or Employment Opportunities;
  - iii. Special needs: mental or physical health, elder offender, etc.;
  - iv. AIDS Service Organizations (ASO's);
  - v. Substance Abuse (drug and alcohol) and Aftercare resources;
  - vi. Local Community Action Agency programs; and
  - vii. Career Center at local Department of Labor Office.

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**Note: Attachment 3, Department of Driver Services Residence Verification form shall not be given to the offender during their period of incarceration. The offender receives it on community supervision, if applicable. Upon release, it allows for immediate access to State ID or Driver’s License (if no infractions/suspensions are pending)**

- J. Residence Planning Process: It is expected that responsible staff recognize, respond to and comply with ALL release and reentry guidelines, processes and procedures in this and other related policies and procedures.
  - 1. For all offenders having completed the diagnostic process, without having an adequate housing or placement option, it shall be the responsibility of the DW/CT or Counseling Supervisor to ensure all steps are taken to provide institutional coordination and follow-up—to provide adequate housing. At minimum, the following steps must be completed:
    - i. Housing assistance consultation and referral on behalf of the offender to DCS (and GA-PRI where available).
    - ii. Options review—the assigned Case Manager/Counselor shall review predetermined placement options with the offender and identify names, addresses, and phone numbers of all possible housing options.
    - iii. Outside Contacts—it is expected that telephone calls be allowed to assist the offender when necessary. Calls may include, but are not be limited to family, friends, previous employers, housing providers, nursing homes, etc.
  - 2. Documentation: All direct and collateral contacts shall be documented in the Reentry Checklist module in SCRIBE, specifically outlining the residence planning steps that have been taken.

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3. Resources: If the offender does not have a residence plan, the following resources will be utilized:
- i. DCS/GA-PRI: Contact and collaboration;
  - ii. THOR Directory:
    - a. The parole managed link for parole approved housing options is [http://www.pap.state.ga.us/Thor\\_ejb-war/accounts](http://www.pap.state.ga.us/Thor_ejb-war/accounts)
    - b. Special attention must be paid to conditions of various housing providers.
  - iii. Family: Ask the inmate or his/her family for placement recommendations in their local area.
    - a. This may include friends, church resources, and business contacts.
  - iv. File: The offender's institutional file shall be utilized when searching housing options. Personal history statement, past addresses, former employers, etc. are typically documented in the offender's institutional file.
    - a. Sometimes this information will be found in SCRIBE, but often times depending upon the length of incarceration, much of this information is not populated in SCRIBE.
  - v. Faith Based and Non-Profit Entities: For example:
    - a. Faith-Based Directory;
    - b. Georgia Aftercare Network; and
    - c. United Way Resource number 211.
  - vi. Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

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- a. Provides detailed information about rental properties at: [www.georgiahousingsearch.org](http://www.georgiahousingsearch.org), and
- b. Housing opportunities for people with AIDS (HOPWA) A housing resource for those with HIV/AIDS: <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/specialneeds/programs/hopwa.asp>
- vii. Veteran's Assistance:
  - a. If the offender has a history of Military Service, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs for placement assistance.
  - b. A veteran's resource book is available on CAPTIVA and the G.D.C. public website under Reentry Services section.
- viii. Nursing Homes: Long term care facilities, approved through the Office of Health Services and Georgia Healthcare Association:
  - a. Georgia Healthcare Association: [www.ghca.info/](http://www.ghca.info/)
  - b. Georgia Nursing Home Association: [www.gnha.org/](http://www.gnha.org/)
- 4. Problem Residence Review Committee (*PR Review Committee*): The Committee will be composed of the DW/CT, or Care and Treatment / Counseling Supervisor, Chief Counselor, and the Case Manager/Counselor.  
Process: The *PR Review Committee* meetings shall be for the purpose of reviewing the status of residential options:
  - i. The committee shall meet on a monthly basis, on a date determined by the institution.
  - iii. All PR Review Committee members are to be notified of meeting location and date.
  - iv. The case manager shall electronically submit the status of offenders on their respective caseloads to the committee prior to the meeting.

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5. Internal Reviews:
  - i. To ensure the assigned Case Manager/Counselor is doing everything possible to facilitate a successful reentry, the Counseling Supervisor shall:
    - a. Conduct monthly case note reviews on 10% of the offenders who have passed their TPM or Parole Problem Residence List dates and ensure SCRIBE is documented.
    - b. Upon the completion of this review, it shall be forwarded to the institutional Problem Residence Review Committee (PR Review Committee) for further guidance. See Attachment 4, *Problem Housing File Review*.
6. Institutions Designated as *Sex Offender Release Facilities* will designate a *Sex Offender Counselor*.
  - i. Duties include validation of a residence plan that complies with State law and/or State Board of Pardons and Paroles guidelines. Refer to GDC SOP 222.07 for specific instructions regarding sex offender release issues.

K. Online Social Security/Disability Title II:

1. Social Security Disability Income (SSDI): Under the G.D.C. Pre-Release agreement between Social Security and GDC, Medical and Mental Health offenders shall have Social Security disability benefits applications submitted within 3 months of the TPM or MRD for approval.

Note: Though the application can only be submitted 3 months prior to release; it is important to remember that the process of completing the application can take time, so it is recommended to start the application from 4-6 months of the release date. All stages of this process should be documented on the *SCRIBE Reentry Checklist*.

- i. According to the Social Security Administration, if an offender was receiving TITLE II (SSDI) benefits prior to incarceration, the benefits

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will simply be restarted once the offender is released and he/she makes/keeps an appointment with the local Social Security office. Therefore, a new application is not necessary for benefits for those offenders.

- ii. For new Title II (SSDI) benefits, a new application must be submitted within the three (3) months prior to the TPM or MRD.
  - a. Title II benefits will not be awarded until the offender is actually released from the facility. The benefits decision will stay in a suspense file at Social Security.
  - b. Social Security should be notified by Correctional personnel at least 30 days prior to the inmate's release to begin the activation process for Title 2 benefits.
  - c. Most offender claimants will not qualify for SSDI due to a limited previous work history.
- iii. All Social Security Title 2 (SSDI) applications shall be submitted electronically.
  - a. SSI/SSDI Outreach Access Recovery (*S.O.A.R.*)
    - 1) The SSDI (Title 2, Form SSA 8000) application is available at: <https://www.ssa.gov/legislation/Attachment%20for%20SSA%20Testimony%207%2025%2012%20Human%20Resources%20Sub%20Hearing.pdf>
    - 2) This document (in paper form) can be used as a helpful worksheet when preparing to complete the electronic version of the form. An example of a completed worksheet may be found at: <https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/sample-soar-application-packet>

**Note: Ensure the most recent form is being used and place the form in the TOPPSTEP envelope**

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2. When offenders report to Social Security after release; they are to report to the local SS Office that services the area of their home address. The counselor is to give this information to the offender and record this activity in SCRIBE.

i. SEE: Attachment #9, *Pre-release Claimant's Checklist*

L. Interstate Compact Process: If an offender is planning to live out-of-state and has parole or probation to follow, Interstate Compact forms should be completed. See GDC-SOP#IIIB07-0001 (Interstate Compact)

1. An **Interstate Compact Application for Parole** must be submitted when the Parole Board requests form completion.

i. Do not initiate this process without parole beginning the process.

ii. Do not submit if there is less than ninety (90) days of Parole remaining on the sentence.

iii. There is a mandatory \$100 Interstate Compact fee that must be paid prior to the Transfer Request being submitted for Out-of- State approval.

2. An **Interstate Compact Application for Probation** must be submitted by the counselor three (3) months prior to release.

i. Remember that this includes those on split sentences.

ii. The counselor should complete the Offender's Application for Interstate Compact Transfer ninety (90) days prior to release and email it to [interstatecompact@dcs.ga.gov](mailto:interstatecompact@dcs.ga.gov).

iii. There is a mandatory \$100 Interstate Compact fee that must be paid prior to the Transfer Request being submitted for Out-of- State approval.

3. All Interstate Compact Fees must be mailed to:

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- i. CBU—Interstate Compact, P.O. Box 1529, Forsyth, GA 31029.
- ii. Payment should be in the form of a Money Order and should contain the offender's: Name, GDC ID#; and, state *INTERSTATE COMPACT FEE*.

**M. Facility Resource—GDC Documents Repository:**

1. The purpose of the GDC Repository is to serve as a central, secure location for documents pertinent to offender reentry as Birth Certificates, DDS Identification Cards/Driver's License, Social Security Cards, educational and vocational completion certificates & certifications, Program Treatment Completion Certificates, and other documents become available to the Repository.
2. Upon receiving these documents, repository staff will scan them into *SCRIBE Offender Documents, Reentry Documents*—in order to provide intra-department (all facility) knowledge of the presence, location and availability of the documents.
3. When requested, or as the Repository otherwise learns of the offender's release date, the Repository will provide all documents on hand original, facsimile, and copied) to the facility releasing the offender. Ideally, the Repository will provide the documents approximately 120 days before release.
4. The facility should use the **GDC Repository email address** ([gdc.repository@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:gdc.repository@gdc.ga.gov)) when communicating with the repository, or ordering delivery of previously issued/existing offender reentry document(s)—birth certificates, DDS ID/DL, certificates, etc.
  - i. Items contained in the repository may be viewed through *SCRIBE Offender Documents*.
  - ii. **NOTE:** To request issue of an offender Birth Certificate the facility should communicate through the **Vital Records email address** ([gdcvitalrecords@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:gdcvitalrecords@gdc.ga.gov)).

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iii. The repository does not issue birth certificates.

N. Facility Resource—GDC Transitional Services facility assistance and support

1. Transitional Services staff will conduct mandatory visits to all State Prisons, Transitional Centers, county Prisons Private Prisons, Probations Detention Centers, and Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Centers.
2. Visits will be conducted a minimum of once per quarter, per facility
3. Transitional Services staff will assess programs and processes directly related to the transition of offenders back into the community, to include, but not be limited to:
  - i. TOPPSTEP Review;
  - ii. Problem Housing;
  - iii. Detainers;
  - iv. SSI/SSDI Application Process;
  - v. Career/Resource Center(s);
  - vi. Department of Community Supervision In-Reach Program; and
  - vii. GDC Repository inquires and participation
4. Transitional Services staff will:
  - i. Conduct these reviews in order to identify and support those areas that may need refinement.
  - ii. Make themselves available to answer questions and offer Transitional Services assistance to facilities.

O. The Department of Community Supervision/Georgia Prisoner Reentry Initiative (GA-PRI) is a corrections partner of the GDC.

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1. GDC staff, shall collaborate with, and allow DSC/GA-PRI staff to have access to incarcerated offenders, prior to their release, for the purposes of preparing offenders for reentry into the community.

**NOTE: At any time that security and safety of the facility, staff, offender, or public is in jeopardy or may be mitigated by allowing DCS staff access, DCS staff will be required to delay their meeting with the offender(s), until such time as their visit will not affect security or safety. Security and safety decisions are the responsibility of GDC staff.**

2. Once released from GDC custody, DCS is responsible for all required, continuing offender correctional supervision.

**P. Staff Responsibility (all):**

1. Staff must ensure all information requests are answered in a timely manner.
2. It is critical that all notification documentation is complete and disseminated to the appropriate correctional and/or law enforcement agencies.
3. Any request from Parole, DCS, RPH, or other agency must be responded to in the allotted time period.

**Q. Oversight:**

1. The Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment, or Counseling Supervisor will have oversight of the offender's reentry planning to ensure compliance with this procedure.
2. The Case Manager/Counselor should be completing the *Reentry Checklist* (SCRIBE) as checklist information is available for entry.
  - i. The Checklist is not to be delayed and then completed all at the same time.

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3. The Warden will ensure that reentry planning is part of the facility mission, and an institutional team concept, that is supported throughout to enhance recidivism reduction and seamless transitioning back into the community.
4. It is imperative that Correction’s staff begin the reentry process when an offender is sentenced to the Georgia Department of Corrections.
5. This SOP will be part of the Comprehensive Audit Review.

**V. Attachments:**

- Attachment 1, Reentry Checklist Narrative: State Prisons, Transitional Centers;
- Attachment 2, Reentry Checklist Narrative: Post-Release—Department of Community Supervision;
- Attachment 3, Department of Driver Services Residency Verification Form;
- Attachment 4, Problem Housing File Review;
- Attachment 5, Flow Chart for Release Processing;
- Attachment 6, TOPPSTEP Checklist;
- Attachment 7, Job Development Package; and
- Attachment 8, Pre-release Claimant's Checklist (Social Security).

**VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:**

Upon completion a copy of Attachment 1 shall be placed in the inmate’s institutional file and in the TOPPSTEP folder. Attachment 2 shall be placed in the detainee’s file. Attachment 3 shall be given to the releasing offender and a copy placed in the institutional file. Attachment 4 shall be maintained in Care

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and Treatment for four years and then destroyed. Attachment 6 and 7 (along with copies of all TOPPSTEP documents) shall be placed in inmate's institutional file and retained retention schedule for that file. Attachment 5 and 8 are guides and shall be maintained until revised or obsolete.