

**MARIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT  
CUSTODY DIVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**CHAPTER 2 - BOOKING  
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**DATE: April 4, 2018**

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**SOBERING CELL USE**

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**POLICY**

Persons may be placed in the sobering cell when they are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. At intake, custody staff must distinguish between several levels of intoxication to make appropriate decisions related to the intake and housing of inebriated inmates. The inmate's behavior shall be the determining factor for sobering cell placement, not his/her charges. Some inmates may be intoxicated to a certain level, but are not a threat to their own safety or the safety of others due to their state of intoxication. These inmates may not need to be placed in a sobering cell. However, they should be observed for a sufficient length of time to validate the decision that they do not require time in a sobering cell.

**DEFINITION:**

**SOBERING CELL:** A padded, multiple occupancy secure cell. The cell is furnished with a toilet and drinking fountain.

**PROCEDURE**

An arrestee brought into the jail facility will be observed and evaluated by the booking staff during the booking process. Persons considered being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol to the extent that they are a danger to themselves or others, disruptive or non-compliant, will be placed into a sobering cell.

The reason for the placement into the sobering cell shall be documented into the Management Tab in the Correctional Management System. Persons who are not a danger to themselves or others, are compliant and not disruptive, may be seated in the booking area in the blue chairs.

Items that could be used to harm the inmate, any other inmate, or staff will be removed prior to placement in the sobering cell. If the removal of the clothing item presents a modesty issue due to exposure of private body areas, supplementary clothing or a jumpsuit will be provided. Medical staff will be notified immediately whenever an inmate is placed into a sobering cell. The inmate's name and time placed into a sobering cell will be noted on the Sobering Cell Log Sheet.

It is essential to provide direct visual observation for inmates in sobering cells at least twice every thirty minutes, or more frequently if necessary. This intermittent, direct visual observation is the best method to promptly identify signs of deteriorating medical conditions (i.e., the inmate is less easily aroused, there is a decreasing ability to follow simple commands, the inmate has difficulty breathing, the inmate appears acutely ill). Because some drug and alcohol related illnesses are potentially life threatening, monitoring inmates in sobering cells is especially important. Jail staff should be alert for inmates who may have ingested large quantities of alcohol and/or drugs just prior to arrest.

The twice every thirty-minute observation requirement should include:

1. Custody staff to ensure that the inmate can be aroused and that there are no safety concerns.
2. Direct visual observation of the inmate to ensure that the inmate is breathing adequately and in no distress, and has no urgent medical problems.

The staff member who initially starts a new Sobering Cell Log Form will ensure that the dates and times are entered on the form. Subsequent checks of inmates in the Sobering cell will be logged on the form legibly and the tracking of inmates by "Inmate #" will be maintained, as the form requires. Custody and nursing staff will note the time and their observation as well as their badge number and, in the case of nurses, "RN" followed by the nurses' initials. Sergeants will precede their badge numbers with an "X".

Jail medical staff will examine arrestees, who still appear to be under the influence after four hours followed by a medical assessment at twelve hours from the time of placement. The examination will include the taking and recording of vital signs. Custody staff will ensure that medical staff is alerted at or near the four hour and twelve hour marks, or at any time the arrestee is unresponsive to verbal or physical stimulation, his/her skin color appears abnormal or exhibits any suspicious medical symptoms. Medical staff will determine if the inmate requires urgent medical care or needs further sobering.

The mixing of intoxicated persons and non-intoxicated persons in the sobering cells is not allowed.

Sobering Cell Log Sheets will be placed into the Sobering Cell Log Book located in the small property storage room in Booking. The Administrative Secretary will ensure that the yearly logbooks are stored for 3 years.

**RELATED STANDARDS:**

Title 15, Article 5, Section 1056

Title 15, Article 10, Section 1213

**DATE REVISED**

08-03-94

05-30-95

08-06-04

03-15-07

05-11-17

By order of

JAMIE SCARDINA  
BUREAU COMMANDER