

## **Structured Decision Making**

In the past, decisions about case management have often been decided by the individual probation officer, and thus could vary significantly between workers in different probation units in the same system. Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a philosophy of case management that provides youth and families with consistent guidelines for court supervision. It is designed to provide immediate responses to both positive and negative behavior. A youth who is under supervision at North County Probations Services Unit and moves to East County Probation Services Unit will have the same method of supervision, accountability and responses to behavior. This enables the youth and families to better understand the system and be able to rely on consistent, predictable responses from probation staff.

SDM follows The Balanced Approach to juvenile justice which incorporates:

- Competency Development – concerns developing the youth’s ability to become a capable member of the community by building up skills, knowledge and abilities.
- Accountability – concerns the youth learning his/her obligation to the victim(s) and the community and taking responsibility for the offense.
- Community Safety- concerns the youth’s responsibility to change his/her behavior and not re-offend, thus making the community safer.

There have been six SDM Project Teams working during the past year to modify and/or create new products to enhance the Court’s Case Management System. They are:

**Needs Assessment**  
**Service Plan**  
**Level of Supervision**  
**Graduated Responses**  
**Social History**  
**Disposition Matrix**

The **Needs Assessment** is a non-diagnostic screening tool that provides the probation officer with a broad picture of the needs of a youth and his/her family. These identified needs will be addressed by incorporating them into the court recommendations for disposition and Service Plan if the youth is placed on court supervision.

In determining the **Level of Supervision**, the probation officer uses the VA Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Risk Assessment tool to determine the youth’s risk to re-offend and the concurrent risk to the community – that being high, moderate or low risk. Once the level of risk is determined, the Level of Supervision chart directs the standards of supervision: how often and in what format (face to face, by telephone, etc.) a youth and family are seen each month by the probation officer. It also provides standards to see youth in local residential facilities as well as out of jurisdiction residential placements.

The **Service Plan** incorporates the client's level of risk to re-offend and the client's needs (on Needs Assessment) using the Balanced Approach, which addresses: 1) Community Protection, 2) Personal Accountability and 3) Competency Development. Each of these Areas contains a Goal, a Strategy for accomplishing the Goal, an Objective and a method of Measurement. Areas of high need from the Needs Assessment are incorporated into the Service Plan's competency development area.

**Graduated Responses** involve applying an immediate and consistent range of responses to both positive and negative behavior. Responses to negative behavior are called sanctions and is determined using a grid incorporating Risk Level and Violation Seriousness Level. The responses to a negative behavior can range from an admonishment by the probation officer to curfew restriction, office sitting, house arrest or probation violation and detention order. The responses for positive behavior, called incentives, range from verbal praise, praise letter, certificates, participation in a previously restricted extracurricular activity to closing probation early. These responses are determined by months on probation and level of risk. For example, the first three months of probation would not allow for closing probation early, but would allow for verbal praise and a certificate. In months four through six an incentive might include attendance at a special event; at the seven to nine month stage, early closing of probation might be an option. Graduated Responses are designed to reinforce the youth's ability to maintain consistent positive behavior.

The **Social History** is a comprehensive report written for all youth placed on probation, or cases where the court orders a pre-dispositional report. The content is driven by Department of Juvenile Justice standards and the report provides all pertinent background on the youth and family. In the SDM framework, the Social History incorporates the information from the Risk Assessment, Needs Assessment, Levels of Supervision and Dispositional Matrix, when appropriate. This information is provided in the summary of the social history to establish a Service Plan or in the recommendation for court disposition in the pre-dispositional report.

The **Disposition Matrix** was designed to provide court personnel with a useful tool in formulating recommendations for dispositions in a consistent, effective, and appropriate manner. The disposition matrix is based on the Balanced Approach, and takes into consideration personal accountability, competency development, and community protection in determining dispositions. Probation staff must consider the seriousness of the offense including the juvenile's past record, risk level, and the need for services. The philosophy of this Court Service Unit is to recommend intervention in the least-restrictive environment to meet the goals of the Balanced Approach.

The matrix addresses dispositions available to the court based on levels established by the presenting offense(s); Child In Need of Supervision (CHINS), Non-Committable, and Committable (to the VA Department of Juvenile Justice.) The disposition matrix adheres to a graduated response philosophy in determining disposition alternatives. Prior to using the disposition matrix, probation staff must have current versions of the risk assessment

and the needs assessment. Recommendations will be based on the subject's record and the severity of the offenses, the risk level, and may be modified by the extent of needs. These considerations determine what dispositions will be available for the case. Whenever a charge is reduced or amended, the probation officer shall use the modified charge for identifying disposition options. The probation officer's knowledge of the youth, his/her individual circumstances, and the background of the family will continue to play an important part in arriving at a disposition.

The disposition matrix is intended to be used in all instances where the Probation and Parole Officers of this court will be expected to offer recommendations to the Court. This will typically include pre-disposition cases, cases where an Investigation and Report is ordered, probation and parole cases with new charges, and Violation of Probation/Parole cases. It will also be used by the Inter-Disciplinary Team (IDT) and the Court's Diagnostic Team.

The actual disposition matrix for the three levels of presenting offense(s) is attached.

<b>Any case designated High Needs may have their risk status raised one level.</b>	<b>Risk Level</b>	<b>CHINS - Supervision</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court ordered compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Impact of Separation &amp; Divorce</li> <li>➤ Transfer legal custody of child</li> <li>➤ Parental cooperation</li> <li>➤ Attendance at school</li> <li>➤ Reside at residence</li> <li>➤ Location restriction</li> <li>➤ Comply with treatment (Parent/Child)</li> <li>➤ Anger Management</li> <li>➤ Individual or Family Counseling</li> <li>➤ Substance abuse services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Deferred Disposition</li> <li>• Restriction/Deny Driver's License</li> <li>• Community Service</li> <li>• Court Review</li> </ul>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Probation (up to 6 months)</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Probation (6-12 months)</li> <li>• Less Secure Shelter (maximum 10 days)</li> <li>• Girls Probation House*</li> <li>• Boys Probation House/Transitional Living Program*</li> <li>• Residential Treatment*</li> </ul>	

\*Probation length based on program needs

<b>Any case designated High Needs may have their risk status raised one level.</b>	<b>Risk Level</b>	<b>NON-COMMITTABLE YOUTH</b>	
	<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim Impact Program</li> <li>• Anger Management</li> <li>• Deferred Disposition</li> <li>• Court Ordered Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Comply with treatment (parent/child)</li> <li>➤ Location Restriction</li> <li>➤ Fire Stop</li> <li>➤ Attend School</li> <li>➤ Substance abuse services</li> <li>➤ Impact of Separation &amp; Divorce</li> <li>➤ Transfer Legal Custody</li> <li>➤ Parental Cooperation</li> <li>➤ Drug Court</li> <li>➤ No contact provision</li> <li>➤ Individual or Family Counseling</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Service</li> <li>• Restitution</li> <li>• Code Requirement Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SAFE</li> <li>➤ License Restriction</li> <li>➤ Sex Offender Registry</li> </ul> </li> <li>• License Restriction/Denial/Revocation</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$150)</li> </ul>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Probation (6 months)</li> <li>• JDC (Juvenile Detention Center) maximum 10 days</li> <li>• ADC (Adult Detention Center) up to 30 days</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$250)</li> <li>• Variable stay Girls Probation House*</li> </ul>	
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Boys Probation House/Transitional Living Program*</li> <li>• Residential treatment*</li> <li>• Probation (6 to 12 months)</li> <li>• JDC (up to 20 days)</li> <li>• ADC (up to 60 days)</li> <li>• SHOCAP</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$500)</li> </ul>		

\*Probation length based on program needs

<b>Any case designated High Needs may have their risk status raised one level.</b>	<b>Risk Level</b>	<b>COMMITTABLE YOUTHS</b>	
	<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court Ordered Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Comply with Treatment (parent/child)</li> <li>➤ No contact provision</li> <li>➤ Location Restriction</li> <li>➤ Attend School</li> <li>➤ Substance abuse services</li> <li>➤ Transfer Legal Custody</li> <li>➤ Parental Cooperation</li> <li>➤ STOP</li> <li>➤ Drug Court</li> <li>➤ Fire Stop</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to dismiss/Reduce in 12 months (16.1-278.8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Detention Center (maximum 20 days)</li> <li>• Probation (up to 6 months)</li> <li>• Adult Detention Center (up to 90 days)</li> <li>• Transitional Living Program*</li> <li>• Victim Impact Program</li> <li>• Code Requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SAFE</li> <li>➤ License Restriction</li> <li>➤ Sex Offender Registry</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Anger Management</li> <li>• Community Service</li> <li>• Restitution</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$150)</li> </ul>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Continue to Dismiss/Reduce in 24 months.</li> <li>• Probation (up to 12 months)</li> <li>• Juvenile Detention Center (maximum 25 days)</li> <li>• BETA (with suspended commitment)</li> <li>• Adult Detention Center (up to 6 months)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys Probation House*</li> <li>• Girls Probation House*</li> <li>• Residential treatment*</li> <li>• SHOCAP</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$250)</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dispositions listed above</li> <li>• Probation (12 months or more)</li> <li>• JDC (maximum 30 days)</li> <li>• ADC (up to 12 months)</li> <li>• Fine (maximum up to \$500)</li> <li>• DJJ Serious Offender Commitment (16.1-285.1)</li> <li>• Indeterminate Commitment to DJJ</li> </ul>		

\*Probation up to indefinite