



State of New Jersey

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May 1998

STATE/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

The mission and function of multi-disciplinary teams

The Juvenile Justice Commission is promulgating this guidance concerning the mission and function of the multi-disciplinary teams sponsored by the County Youth Services Commissions. The Rules (N.J.A.C. 13:90-2.9) pertaining to the duties and responsibilities of the County Youth Services Commissions require that the county commissions:

14. Determine whether a need exists, and if so, sponsor the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams (MDT's) to plan specific sanctions and services to individual youth: as an alternative to detention for a juvenile charged as delinquent; as a recommendation for a disposition option for a judge of the Family Court upon an adjudication of delinquency; and, as a component of aftercare following the commitment of a juvenile to the Juvenile Justice Commission by a judge of the Family Court.

The County Youth Services Commissions, as part of their planning for the use of State/Community Partnership Grant funds, may set aside a portion of these funds for the purchase of Client Specific services and sanctions. The use of Client Specific funds must be planned by the multi-disciplinary teams established in compliance with the above cited Rule (N.J.A.C. 13:90-2.9). The Guidelines for the disbursement of these funds were promulgated on August 1, 1996 and are attached.

The Juvenile Justice Commission is providing this mission and goal statement for all of the County Youth Services Commissions to assist MDTs in clarifying their role. County specific standards may be developed by County Youth Services Commissions with the State's guidance as per this mission statement.



MISSION/GOALS OF THE MDTs

Purposes of MDTs

There are three purposes of MDTs:

- 1) Detention Review-The teams recommend alternatives to detention to the judge. The purpose of the MDT is to limit the use of detention (within the confines of public safety) to youth who must be detained in accordance with the law, and to move these cases to disposition as soon as possible;
- 2) Disposition Recommendations-The teams advise the judge on needs and service options for disposition.
- 3) Aftercare-The teams assist the Juvenile Justice Commission in developing aftercare/parole case plans.

The goal is to assist the Family Court in the use of alternatives so that juveniles are in detention the shortest time necessary consistent with public safety. The MDT assists in moving juveniles through the system as expeditiously as possible. This includes developing options for alternatives to detention pre-adjudication and options for disposition post adjudication. The mission is to decrease the number of juveniles in detention who are appropriate for alternative placement and to make the most appropriate use of resources in the community.

SOURCE OF THE MDT'S AUTHORITY

The MDT is established by the County Youth Services Commission. The Youth Services Commission develops an understanding with the judiciary that the MDT will review cases of juveniles who are being considered for and/or are in detention and cases of juveniles who are awaiting disposition. The MDT develops an option or options as alternatives to detention or for dispositional placement in an effort to expedite the movement of cases through the system. These options are given to the judge. The judges, prosecutors and public defenders are kept fully informed of the processes and options developed by the MDT.

MDTs are also established to assist the Juvenile Justice Commission's aftercare case managers in the development of juveniles aftercare plans.

WHO SHOULD BE ON THE MDT?

Appropriate members for MDTs include: detention staff, family case manager, probation, DYFS, County Youth Services Commission representative, JJC liaison, a school representative, agency representatives (mental health, service providers). The juvenile and his/her family are present at some MDTs. It is recommended that several members involved in the court process be a core MDT group, with agency representatives and others invited on a case by case basis.

Although the judge, the prosecutor, and the public defender do not have to be present at MDT meetings, it is imperative that the judge, prosecutor and public defender take an active role in the mission and function of the MDT. The prosecutor and the public defender need to be fully informed of the activities of the team and of the options it develops.

STAFFING

The MDT Coordinator is responsible for prioritizing cases, keeping in contact with the core members, making sure court-ordered evaluations are carried out and available for the next hearing, and any other functions in which the MDT may be involved. The key is to have one person responsible for all actions related to the movement of a case under consideration by the MDT.

The development of options for the judge should be based on reliable facts about the case and the juvenile. Part of the MDTs potential to expedite cases will center on the coordinator's ability to identify where information "falls through the cracks" and create systems within the court system that are focused on obtaining information. For example, these sub-systems include: expediting referral forms, getting evaluations done, and developing forms when needed. The key to expeditious case processing may be the MDT and its coordinator's ability to be flexible, to adapt, to re-evaluate, to keep moving and be energized which ultimately, will drive the process.

In some counties the coordinator works for the judge. In those counties the MDT coordinator takes care of the case management issues for the judge so that the process runs smoothly and the judge can attend to his/her schedule. When the MDT coordinator works directly for the judge, a call or request from the coordinator has the same effect as a call from the judge.

In other counties, the coordinator works for the county or an agency. In any case, the coordinator is charged with the responsibility to get necessary information and expedite cases. The MDT coordinator looks for dispositional alternatives. The job involves constant, aggressive, short term case management. The MDT meeting is only one part of the process. Ideas and opportunities are followed up, information needed is collected. The MDT coordinator is the "nudge", making sure that people follow through on what they promise to do.

WHICH CASES ARE REVIEWED BY THE MDTs?

Many MDTs meet weekly at the detention center. They review everyone who has entered detention since the last meeting. Most counties review every juvenile in detention and all juveniles in detention alternative programs. In the larger counties, it is helpful to prioritize cases, spending time on those cases on which the MDT can be effective. Some of the larger counties have three separate MDTs: one for detention; one for disposition; and one for aftercare.

The selection of cases to be reviewed by the MDT should not be by a referral process, but rather a carefully planned selection process agreed to by the members of the MDT in consultation with the judge. Written priorities for the cases to be reviewed pre and post adjudication should be based on the purposes of the MDT as set forth in the Rules ("...to plan specific sanctions and services to individual youth; as an alternative to detention for a juvenile charged as delinquent; as a recommendation for a disposition option for a judge of the Family Court upon an adjudication of delinquency; and as a component of aftercare following the commitment of a juvenile to the Juvenile Justice Commission...")

INFORMATION NEEDS

Each MDT should have a general outline of the basic information it needs. This should include: background (history); present issues (what is needed to get a perspective on the juvenile); and disposition information (what may be appropriate and available).

The success of the MDT is dependent on the availability of sufficient information to develop informed options. Examples of information used by counties includes discovery information-police reports, rap sheets, and the PDR. The MDT should have access to important information such as:

- 1) Is the case open to DYFS?
- 2) Is the case open to the CART? What services have been provided?
- 3) What is in the best interest of the community? Of the juvenile?

The process must clearly show that all other avenues for services were exhausted or inappropriate in order to keep a child from being detained.

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN STRUCTURING AN MDT

Gatekeeping for funded programs

Counties are encouraged to delegate gatekeeping responsibility to their MDTs for most or all of the programs funded through the county youth services commission (with the exception of prevention programs). Referrals to programs which have been established by the County Youth Services Commission to reduce detention overcrowding by providing detention alternatives and to increase community disposition options are made through the MDT. This ensures that the use of these funded programs is appropriate and that the judges are made aware of all available resources.

Impatience

The function of MDTs should reflect impatience by not allowing agencies involved with the process to dictate time-frames in which to move a case out of detention. Movement out of detention should not be held up by vacations, lack of response to letters, etc. The MDTs mission is expediency. Part of the MDTs objective is to make sure that time-frames are met according to the juveniles' and the courts' needs.

The MDT assists in moving juveniles expeditiously through the system with reliable facts.

Due Process Issues

Due process issues need to be considered when structuring MDTs.

- 1) The MDT needs facts in order to develop options for the judge, however, the MDT needs to be clear about the reliability of those facts, since this issue might become part of the court process.

- 2) If a judge is sitting on the MDT, he/she will hear information that has not been tested or challenged. An MDT recommendation should be likened to that of expert testimony, which can be tested on foundation for recommendation and conclusion. All documents and relevant information that the MDT receives regarding a case must go to both the prosecution and the defense in order to meet due process criteria.

- 3) The MDT should not be looking for one plan (consensus). This limits the judge's

discretion. Having one recommendation previously agreed to before the hearing may open due process questions. When there are options, the prosecutor and public defender can make arguments and let the judge decide on an outcome. The MDT develops realistic choices consistent with public safety for the judge, focusing on what resources the current system can provide. What kind of resources are there relevant to the needs of the juvenile? Whether or not a judge sits on the team is not as important as the judge's interest and enthusiasm for the team. Because the purpose of an MDT is to develop options for the judge, its effectiveness is dependent on a stated agreement that the judge will consider these options.

Short and Long Term Planning

The mission of the MDT also involves the types of options that can be used between the detention review stage and the disposition. An MDT can look at a case as needing both short term options (Is there something we can do now to get the juvenile out of detention consistent with public safety?) and long-term options (Given the current information, what needs will this juvenile have in the long run, closer to disposition). Short term options will consider need for shelter/finding shelter, school attendance, adequate supervision and the need for evaluation. Options which increase the juvenile's level of supervision in the community make it more reasonable to consider release. The relevant question is: What needs to be in place for safe release from detention? The key is that the MDT is not necessarily looking for a "best idea", it is looking for alternatives. The first decision to detain can be revisited by an MDT as more information becomes available.

CARTS vs MDTs

The MDT is different from a CART which is established under the guidelines of the Department of Human Services. The JJC MDT is not a forum for developing consensus. JJC MDT's should distinguish themselves from social service functions such as the responsibilities of the CARTs. JJC MDTs are juvenile justice groups. The purpose of the MDTs is to move quickly in cases where alternatives, acceptable to the court, can be developed to secure the presence of the juvenile at the next hearing and which would not threaten the safety of persons or property of the community; not to set up an ongoing social service plan. The MDTs are responsible for moving cases toward disposition by developing reasonable choices both preadjudication and post adjudication for judges.

Does an MDT need consensus on one option or set of options?

This issue centers on the difference between giving the judge one recommendation (either at detention review or at disposition) that the majority of the MDT agrees is the best option versus using the MDT to figure out what each agency, as represented on the MDT or available in the community, can do for a particular juvenile and then developing those options. The court develops the appropriate placement based on the facts of the case.

MDTs should give the judge as many options as possible from which to choose at both the detention review and the disposition. The goal of arriving at a consensus makes for less creative plans! There are several advantages to having more than one recommendation: 1) it leads to more creativity and flexibility in the planning of a detention alternative or a disposition. The issue is to get as many practical options as possible not to limit possibilities but to increase them. The group should be about finding out what everyone around the table can do-not what they can't do! 2) it allows for the disposition hearing to occur as intended, where the judge hears the options and the defense and prosecutor make arguments about the appropriateness. Given an option or set of options, the judge is likely to prefer to be presented with alternatives.

Aftercare

A number of the counties, generally the larger counties, have established separate aftercare MDTs. When the MDT is assisting with aftercare planning there are differences from the process of presenting detention alternatives and dispositional options to the judge. When focusing on aftercare, the groups are making recommendations to the JJC aftercare staff and in some cases to probation. When dealing with aftercare, the JJC or probation staff will provide case management.

EXPENDITURE OF CLIENT SPECIFIC FUNDS

Setting aside a small portion of a county's allocation for the purchase of Client Specific Services is an allowable part of the required Plan for the use of State/Community Partnership Grant Program funds. The attached Guidelines for the use of Client Specific funds were promulgated by the Juvenile Justice Commission on August 1, 1996. Client Specific funds are set aside in a special fund to be used for the purchase of individual services and sanctions recommended by the MDT.

The expenditure of Client Specific funds must be tied to the goals established for MDT's. These funds are not intended to be used for general social services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Funds need to further the cause of getting the juvenile out of detention. (Example: buy the child a bed because his is too lumpy vs. buy the child a bed because without one the mother can't take him back.). The funds are specifically for detention alternatives and for community disposition. They are not intended for ongoing services while the juvenile is on probation

The MDT is not organized around the expenditure of Client Specific funds. These funds are a tool to assist in the development of recommendations to the judge. When an MDT finds that the same services and/or vendors are being used with some frequency, the County Youth Services Commission should be notified that these services should be considered in its planning for contracts through an RFP. Counties should be cautious that Client Specific funds not be used to circumvent the Juvenile Justice Commission policy concerning the need to purchase services from providers through a Request for Proposal and contracting process.

In general, Client Specific funds are intended for the very limited goals of providing unavailable services which are necessary to allow a juvenile to be released from detention or to craft a disposition using options provided by the MDT.



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GUIDELINES FOR THE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS APPROVED IN COUNTY PLANS FOR CLIENT SPECIFIC SERVICES

Counties which have set aside funds for the purchase of Client Specific services and sanctions for individual juveniles will disburse those funds in compliance with the following guidelines.

CRITERIA FOR THE USE OF CLIENT SPECIFIC FUNDS

The criteria for the use of funds for Client Specific services and sanctions is that juveniles are able to remain in the community, as a specific alternative to placement in secure detention or commitment to the Juvenile Justice Commission, with a planned combination of services and sanctions. Funds for Client Specific services may also be used as a part of a comprehensive aftercare plan for reintegration into the community for juveniles adjudicated delinquent and returning to the community following placement through the family court.

The specific target population for Client Specific services is juveniles, referred through the juvenile justice system, 1) who have been charged with an offense and would otherwise await adjudication in secure detention, 2) juveniles who have been adjudicated delinquent and would otherwise be committed to the Juvenile Justice Commission, and/or 3) juveniles adjudicated delinquent and returning to the community after placement. The first priority for this group is those in the Juvenile Justice Commission's Aftercare Program.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

Client specific services are planned by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) which includes appropriate representatives of the juvenile justice system (for example, a family court judge, prosecutor, public defender, detention staff, court and probation personnel, Juvenile Justice Commission liaisons and aftercare workers) and representatives of the community's service system. The MDT for the authorization of funds for Client Specific services will be designated by the County Youth Services Commission. The Rules (N.J.A.C. 13:90-2.9) pertaining to the responsibilities of the County Youth Services Commissions require that the county commissions:



"Determine whether a need exists, and if so, sponsor the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams (MDT'S) to plan specific sanctions and services to individual youth: as an alternative to detention for a juvenile charged as delinquent; as a recommendation for a disposition option for a judge of the Family Court upon an adjudication of delinquency; and, as a component of aftercare following the commitment of a juvenile to the Juvenile Justice Commission by a judge of the Family Court."

AUTHORIZATION FOR CLIENT SPECIFIC SERVICES

The MDT will develop the appropriate recommendations for each juvenile. When the recommendations are completed, the authorization for use of Partnership funds to purchase Client Specific services is made only after it is determined that all existing available programs and services needed to implement the recommendation have been exhausted and there is no other way to implement the plan. Other attempts to provide the services must be documented to insure that Partnership funds are not being used to supplant other local, county, state or private sources of funding.

The form MDT REQUEST AND AUTHORIZATION OF CLIENT SPECIFIC SERVICES is then filled out and signed by the MDT Chair, the County Youth Services Commission Coordinator, and the Juvenile Justice Commission liaison.

ADMINISTRATION OF AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CLIENT SPECIFIC FUNDS

The County Youth Services Commission may administer the Client Specific services funds through the county, use a private agency to broker the funds, or issue an RFP for the administration of Client Specific services. No administrative costs will be provided to the broker agency, however, the broker may retain interest earned on the Client Specific fund balances provided there are no long delays in service provision.

If the funds are administered by the county, a system for expedited payments of a specified portion of the funds must be developed. Counties will be required to establish written procedures for financial accountability, including audit requirements and regular expenditure and obligation reports.

A county must expend and account for grant funds in accordance with those laws and procedures for expending and accounting for its own funds. It is presumed that counties will adhere to the governmental accounting and financial reporting standards promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Boards. These standards constitute generally accepted accounting principles for state and local governments.

The Juvenile Justice Commission requires that each county submit quarterly and year end financial reports. These reports must include regular information about the status of funds used for Client Specific services.

Invoice # _____

MDT
REQUEST AND AUTHORIZATION FOR
CLIENT SPECIFIC SERVICES

County: _____ Date of Request _____

Referral Agency _____

Client Name: _____ Tracker # _____

Authorization Date: _____ Check One: () New () Revised () Emergency

(If this is a revised plan attach original (s))

Services Requested	Frequency & Length/Rate Suggested	Service Provider
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1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Indicate unsuccessful attempts to obtain services

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Total Amount of Funds Obligated _____

MDT Coord./Chair _____ Telephone #: _____

Lead Agency for the Plan: _____

Lead Agency Contact: _____ Telephone #: _____

MDT/Chair Signature Date

Signature of JJC Liaison Date

Other Signature (CYSC Coordinator) Date