
Disposition Matrix

615.1 BACKGROUND

The dispositional matrix will provide data-driven, research-based guidelines to help officers determine the optimal intervention for each youth. The disposition matrix was created on the premise that whenever possible, attempts to safely supervise and deliver services to youth in their homes and communities should be fully exhausted before making a recommendation for detention or an alternative placement.

Research indicates optimal recommendations reduce recidivism while providing the least restrictive option within the suggested range of the matrix cell. The efficacy of the matrix is maximized when youth can be provided with high-quality services that meet their needs within the optimal range. Some of the advantages of using the matrix include:

- (a) Resources are focused on the youth who need them most.
- (b) Reduction in the use of overly intensive intervention for lower-risk youth – a practice which has shown to increase recidivism and thereby jeopardizes public safety.
- (c) Promotes equity and fairness by ensuring youth with similar offenses and risk levels will receive a similar disposition recommendation.

615.2 PROCESS

Following a new petition, officers will complete the following steps:

- (a) Identify the current, most serious presenting offense or true finding.
- (b) Review and/or update the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checkup (SDRRC)-II assessment to determine the youth's current risk level.
- (c) Using the matrix (see reference section), determine the optimal disposition outcome by plotting the most serious presenting offense/true finding and the youth's risk level (as determined by the SDRRC-II).
 - 1. Officers must always begin with the least restrictive setting that has not been previously tried within a particular disposition category
 - 2. If a previous intervention option has proven unsuccessful for a youth, the officer may select the next option within the recommended range. Any further deviations require approval pursuant to section 615.9.
 - 3. Youth who successfully complete a previous intervention (e.g., Urban Camp 85) or supervision level may receive the same or an enhanced version of the service.
- (d) Include the matrix's recommended disposition outcome in the Court report.

615.3 DISPOSITION HEARINGS

The matrix will be used when making disposition recommendations for any new offense. Officers will include the determined recommendation in Court reports.

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615.4 FAST TRACK READINESS HEARINGS

The probation officer will submit one recommendation per offense classification. If the list of allegations are felonies, the probation officer will calculate the recommendation by assuming the youth will admit to a felony. Should the list of allegations contain both misdemeanors and felonies, the officer will submit one recommendation per classification (one recommendation for the felony allegation, and one recommendation for the misdemeanor allegation). In rare cases, the list of allegations may include a misdemeanor, a felony, a serious felony and a 707(b). In that case, the probation officer would submit four recommendations: one for each offense classification.

In instances where the youth has several pending allegations, the officer will likely recommend an in-custody commitment or placement at home. The assigned level of supervision is an internal case assignment process and is not to be included in the Court report.

615.5 FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- (a) **Multiple Counts:** In instances where the youth sustains true findings for multiple counts, the most serious presenting true finding will be used to determine the optimal recommendation.
 - 1. **Harvey Waivers:** Officers will not consider counts dismissed with a Harvey Waiver when determining the most serious offense.
- (b) **Enhancements:** Officers must review enhancements when considering the most serious offense as they may alter a charge, making the offense a serious/violent felony.

615.6 EXCLUSIONS TO THE MATRIX

- (a) **Violations:** The matrix is intended to be used when determining dispositional recommendations for new offenses only, not probation violations. The tool may be used as a resource for violations; however, standard procedures should be followed when addressing probation violations.

615.7 DOCUMENTATION

- (a) **PCMS:** Officers will input recommendations, deviations, Court outcome, and any pertinent notes in the disposition matrix node in PCMS.

615.8 MATRIX DEVIATIONS

In instances where the officer believes a deviation from the optimal recommendation (either more or less restrictive) may be necessary; (e.g. age, mental capacity, disabilities, maturity, criminal sophistication, etc.) the officer is to first screen the case with their Supervising Probation Officer (SPO). Should the SPO deem it appropriate to seek a deviation the matter will be screened with the Division Chief (DC) for authorization.

- (a) **Above Guidelines** are instances where a recommendation is submitted that goes above the recommended cell guidelines; are more restrictive.

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- (b) **Below Guidelines** are instances where a recommendation is submitted that is below the recommended cell guidelines; are less restrictive.
- (c) **Officer Discretion:** Choosing the optimal intervention should be the norm; however, each case has unique and individualized circumstances. Deviations will be rare. This tool is not meant to replace the expertise and creativity of the casework officer. Instead, the hope is to capitalize on those traits while also recognizing the need for a consistent, research-based approach that applies across the board to all our youth.

Officers should be aware that research indicates deviating from the recommended matrix guidelines, for either a more or less restrictive recommendation, may result in higher rates of recidivism.

615.9 COLLABORATIVE COURTS

During the collaborative court process, the tool may be used as a reference; however, the Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) will continue to make disposition recommendations based on the youth's unique case plan needs.

615.10 PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Officers will continue to recommend out-of-home placement when deemed appropriate and approved by the Interagency Placement Committee (IPC) regardless of a youth's risk level or presenting offense.

615.11 PREVIOUS WARDSHIPS

Successfully terminated wardships (Sealed records): Previously attempted interventions will not be considered when jurisdiction is successfully terminated, and the youth's records have been sealed.

Prior wardships (Unsuccessful or without comment): Previous interventions may be considered when determining the optimal recommendation; however, officers must use the current most serious presenting offense or true finding and the current assessed risk level. Officers should be mindful of the length of time between the previous intervention and the current offense as the intervention may no longer be appropriate.

615.12 REFERENCES

San Diego Juvenile Justice Disposition Matrix