ONBOARD

A message from DJJ Director Valerie Boykin

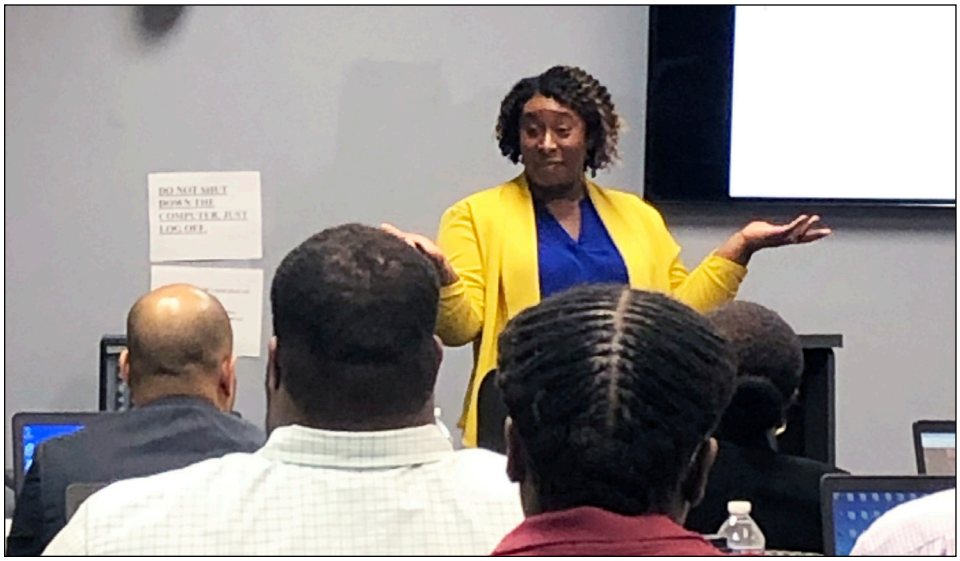
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice September 30, 2019

The Time Has Come For The SDM!

5-Month Pilot Project Sets Stage For Full Implementation

The training is complete, the data is in, and the DJJ Transformation Train is now ready to embark on its next significant journey: the full implementation of the Standardized Disposition Matrix (SDM) tool.

As we continue our mission of protecting the public by preparing court-involved youth to be successful citizens and members of the community, we will implement SDM in our Community Programs Division. The Matrix, by design, uses the youth's risk of reoffending and severity of the offense to identify appropriate disposition recommendations.



Lauren Gospodnetic leads an SDM training session.

I thank all who were involved with this new effort whether you participated in the development, pilot testing, trainings, or educating our staff and partners. I extend a special thank you to Stephanie Garrison, Regional Program Manager, for leading this segment of the transformation journey. Stephanie's tireless efforts along with the support of Tom Woods of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Chris Scharenbroch of the National Council On Crime and Delinquency have brought us to this implementation stage.

As you know, we have adopted the following new guiding principles with a focus on positive youth development: safety, connection, purpose, and fairness. DJJ's SDM aligns with the Positive Youth Development principle of fairness: youth need to be held accountable in a

Risk Level (based on YASI)	Offense Category				
	Misdemeanor Non-Person	Misdemeanor Person	Felony Non-Person	Felony Person	Violent Felony
Low	Level 1 or 2	Level 1 or 2	Level 1 or 2	Level 2 or 3	Level 3 or 4
Moderate	Level 1 or 2	Level 1, 2 or 3	Level 2 or 3	Level 3, 4 or 5	Level 3, 4 or 5
High	Level 2 or 3	Level 2 or 3	Level 3 or 4	Level 3, 4 or 5	Level 3, 4 or 5

The Standardized Disposition Matrix (SDM).

Probation Officer Shirley Thompson of CSU 25–Staunton's Covington office participates in SDM training.

manner proportionate to their offense and offense history and similar to other youth in their situation. The SDM will bring a greater degree of consistency, reliability, and equity to ensure that youth with similar legal histories and risk levels will have appropriate disposition recommendations.

This tool will also help us make more informed, data-driven decisions. By tracking disposition data during implementation and moving forward, DJJ will be able to assess which dispositions produce the best outcomes over time. We will then be able to make data-driven adjustments to the SDM as necessary.

Preliminary Data From Pilot Sites

Within the past year, we have tested the SDM in five court service units (CSUs): CSU 7–Newport News, CSU 12–Chesterfield, CSU 16–Culpeper, CSU 20W–Warrenton, and CSU 22–Chatham. The pilot test began on September 4, 2018, and ended on March 4, 2019. DJJ's Research Unit's Senior Research Analysts, Nina Hyland and Joshua Brevard, analyzed SDM data from the five sites. The data analysis concluded the following:

- As of April 2019, the pilot sites entered 123 cases, representing 106 youth.
- POs presented recommendations to a judge for 74 youth, and 89.2% were consistent with the SDM recommendation.
- In the cases in which a PO made a recommendation, the court took the following actions:
  - Fifty-one youth (68.9%) were given a disposition within the SDM range.
  - Nine (12.2%) were given a disposition above the SDM range.
  - One youth (1.4%) was given a disposition below the SDM range.
  - For the remaining 17.6% of youth, the judge either dismissed the case or the youth received other services.
- The most common dispositions, as determined by the court, were court-ordered probation (29.2%), post-disposition case management (14.2%), and referral and reporting of outcomes to the court (10.4%).

One of the benefits of the SDM is it allows us to examine how different groups of youth are treated at disposition. Preliminary data on equity show the following:

- Of the 106 youth, 62.3% were black, 33.0% were white, and 4.7% were from another racial group. Black and white youth participated in the SDM process at approximately the same rate (85%).
- The vast majority of youth had PO recommendations that were consistent with the SDM recommendation. One hundred percent of white youth had a recommended disposition within the range recommended by the SDM, compared to 81.8% of black youth.
- When the court considered the POs' SDM level recommendations, the court gave 59.1% of black youth a disposition that was consistent with the SDM recommendation, compared to 80.0% of white youth.

Pilot Site Data Observations

Given a choice to participate in the SDM process, the vast majority of young people opted in. With few exceptions, stakeholders of all stripes in the pilot sites (judges, legal personnel, CSU staff, young people and their families) participated in the process and found it to be minimally burdensome and non-disruptive. The recommended ranges of

Our SDM Training Team

Stephanie Garrison

Teresa Moore

Lauren Gospodnetic

Sharnise Jackson

Frank Piotrowski

Kelly Rummel

Emily Thomas

dispositions that are spelled out in the SDM grid clearly made sense to people in the pilot sites, since the vast majority of dispositions were consistent with the SDM recommendation. The pilot showed that it's feasible to collect data about dispositional recommendations and decisions in a consistent way, that is shedding new light on one of the most critical decision points in our system. We have not had a way of examining these decisions at this level of detail before. All of that is resoundingly positive!

Now that we're collecting this data, one of the things we can do with it is to observe and measure differences in the ways that young people experience our system, and differences in the way our system treats them. The initial data collected during the pilot constitute a small and not necessarily representative sample of dispositional decision making in the Commonwealth – but they clearly show the need to be vigilant about equitable treatment of young people by race: Black youth were more likely than White youth to receive PO recommendations and court dispositions that were more severe than the SDM recommendation. Because the SDM accounts for a young person's risk profile and the severity of their adjudicated offense, those factors cannot explain these differences in treatment of young people by race.

As the SDM rollout continues, we will monitor the data to see whether and where these differences persist. And as SDM becomes an established part of our practice, we will use the data to engage with stakeholders to learn more about what underlies these differences in treatment, and what changes in our policy, programs, practices, and philosophy would help to mitigate them. DJJ has for several years now been a data-driven organization, committed to using data to identify problems and drive improvements in our system. SDM will be a powerful new application of that long-standing principle.

Implementing Full Rollout

On May 21, DJJ's Legislation and Policy Unit published the SDM procedure for full implementation by January 1, 2020. The document includes procedures for handling combined adjudication and disposition hearings or separated hearings. It also provides instructions for completing the electronic SDM tool and protocols for quality assurance management. Joanna Laws, Policy and Procedure Coordinator, guided the development of the procedure with input from the five pilot site coordinators, probation officers, supervisors, and directors.

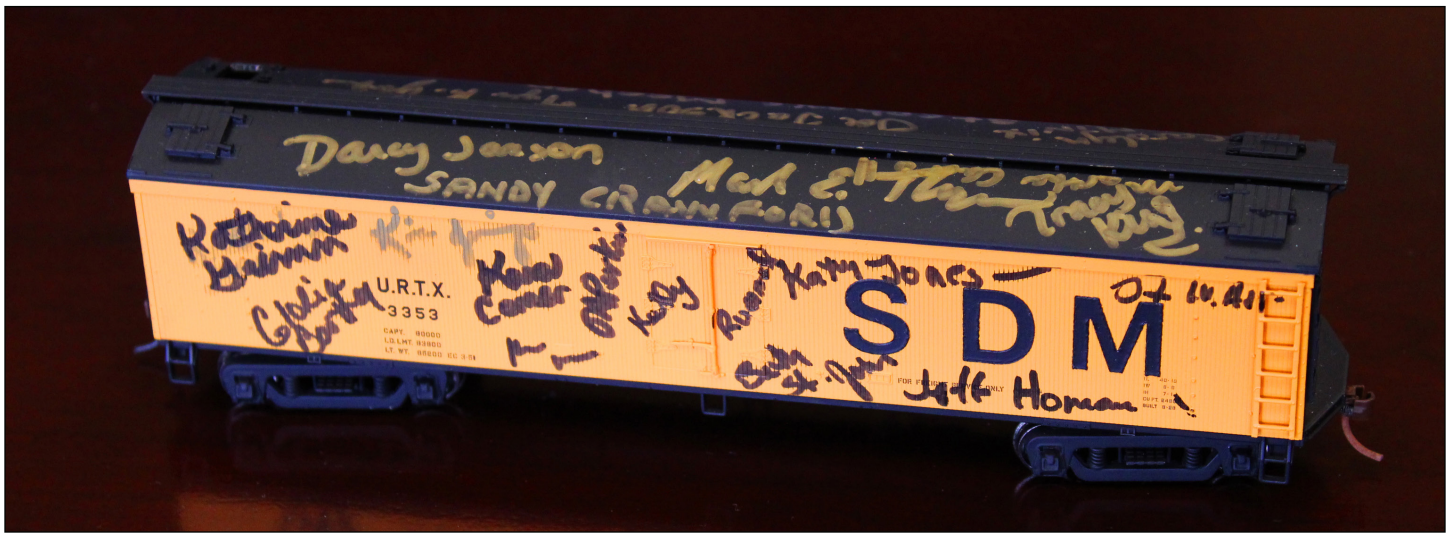
From June 17 through July 12, DJJ's Community Programs Training Unit, led by Teresa Moore, along with Lauren Gospodnetic, Sharnise Jackson, Frank

Piotrowski, Kelly Rummel, and Emily Thomas, developed and offered SDM training in each of DJJ's five regions. Training Supervisor Teresa Moore, the Community Programs Training Team, and adjunct trainers accomplished the following:

- 11 days of training in 7 statewide locations
- 22 sessions conducted
- A total of 599 individuals attended, averaging just over 27 per session

During the team's travels, the team collected CSU directors' signatures on a symbolic SDM train car. The Community Programs Training Team will offer SDM training again in the fall of 2019.

On July 12, DJJ's Information and Technology (IT) Unit put into production an electronic SDM assessment tool in the Caseload Management Module of our electronic data management system. Jared Miller, Business Systems Analyst, along with IT Program Specialist Daxinadevi Oruganti and a SDM work group, designed and developed the mechanics of the electronic SDM tool. Jared and the SDM work group also revised CSU workload status codes, which now incorporate the five SDM levels.

Starting now through December, the five DJJ Regional Program Managers and CSU directors will phase in the implementation of the SDM procedure within the 34 CSUs. The implementation process will include stakeholder training and customization of the SDM process to fit existing court processes in each jurisdiction. Stakeholder and CSU staff buy-in is the key to the successful implementation of DJJ's Standardized Disposition Matrix.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work on this initiative, and I look forward to continued progress on this critical issue as we move forward. As always, I welcome questions and suggestions, and I am excited to discuss this further with all of you in the coming months.