



CSU UNITY

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

September, 2016

New Tools To Help Us Work In Tandem



District Juvenile Court Judge Vanessa L. Jones conducts court in a Chesterfield courtroom. Her colleague, Judge J. David Rigler, will serve on the Southern Region Focus Group that will study how to bring the Disposition Matrix to CSU 12.

Welcome to the *CSUnity*! As the transformation of our agency continues to move forward, we are introducing this communication tool, as its name implies, to ensure that all our employees are kept abreast of transformation activities that will have an increasing impact on the way we deliver services to our youth in the CSUs

This monthly newsletter is designed to help our Department

remain “unified” in our mission to implement the best quality services available to the youth we serve with fidelity to the most recent research and evidence-based practices.

The Disposition Matrix

In the first issue of the *CSUnity*, we introduce the key elements of a standardized Disposition Matrix that all CSUs will begin using next year to guide court recommendations

at disposition. The purpose of a standardized disposition matrix is to bring a greater degree of consistency, reliability, and equity to the assessment and decision-making process.

Last January, DJJ’s research unit collected a two-year disposition data set from BADGE for analysis. The Annie E. Casey Foundation in collaboration with the National Council of Crime and Delinquency

is conducting an analysis of the data. Upon completion, the results will guide the development of a “model” disposition matrix that will be customized within each Court Service Unit District in 2017.

Stakeholder focus groups are currently being held in the Central and Eastern regions to provide an overview of the function of the disposition matrix, preliminary data analysis, and an overview of the disposition matrix implementation work plan. The groups include an array of juvenile court stakeholders: judges, attorneys, probation officers, probation supervisors, CSU directors, law enforcement, and other child serving agency representatives. The Southern, Western, and Northern regions will convene stakeholder groups in the near future. Keep in touch with your regional program manager to know when a focus group will be scheduled in your area.

When implemented, the Matrix will help us do the following:

- Make objective recommendations in a juvenile court disposition hearing.



Tom Woods, senior associate with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, conducts a session on how the Dispositional Matrix works. (Photo: Beth Stinnett)

- Determine the most appropriate level of supervision and custody for adjudicated youth at the time of case disposition.
- Help judicial and probation officers make more informed decisions that enhance practices and policies for safer communities.
- Allow for the allocation of resources to where they will be most efficient and effective.

- Rely on the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument’s measurement of risk and need.

- Match a youth to the appropriate level of court service unit intervention and supervision.

In the coming months, we will focus further on the Dispositional Matrix:

- A great deal of research went into the formation of the Matrix. We’ll have the experts who created it talk about the science behind it.

- We will offer ways you can use the key elements of the Matrix to apply to your own unique situation.

- The Matrix will be the third structured decision-making tool adopted by DJJ. We will revisit the other two: the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI) and the Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) to explore how the three can work together.

If you have a topic you’d like to see covered in the *CSUnity*, your suggestions are welcome! Please contact Public Information Officer Greg Davy at gregory.davy@djj.virginia.gov.



A Central Region focus group met recently in Charlottesville to get a Dispositional Matrix overview. Members, from left: CSU 9 Williamsburg Senior Probation Officer Sharnise Jackson, District 16 Juvenile Court Judge Frank Somerville, City of Fredericksburg Commonwealth’s Attorney LaBravia Jenkins, James City County/City of Williamsburg Commonwealth’s Attorney Nate Green, Augusta County Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney Alexandra Meador, CSU 25–Staunton Director Saundra Crawford, CSU 16 Intake Supervisor Marc Moore, CSU 16 Director Martha Carroll. Not pictured: DJJ Deputy Director for Community Services Valerie Boykin, Statewide Program Manager Beth Stinnett, Southern Region Program Manager Regina Hurt, Central Region Program Manager Stephanie Garrison, District 25 Chief Judge Laura Dascher, Augusta County Chief Public Defender Peter Boatner, CSU 15–Fredericksburg Senior Intake Officer Addie Shankle, CSU 24–Lynchburg Probation Supervisor Daryl Holt. (Photo: Beth Stinnett)