

Misdemeanor Diversion Program Fact Sheet

YOUTH JUSTICE PROJECT

What are Misdemeanor Diversion Programs?

Misdemeanor Diversion Programs (MDPs) are collaborative, locally-driven programs aimed at keeping first-time, low-risk 16- and 17-year olds out of the adult criminal system. MDPs operate pre-arrest in cases where law enforcement would otherwise file a criminal charge.

MDPs are designed to impose an immediate and individualized consequence on the youth while preventing the youth from experiencing all the negative direct and collateral consequences of entering the adult criminal court system.

Best Practices for MDPs

- Operate pre-arrest and pre-charge so that no criminal record is created
- Strong support from stakeholders, especially law enforcement agencies who will be making the referrals
- Common understanding that low-risk youth need brief and individualized consequences as opposed to intensive program requirements and supervision
- MDP coordinator who is trained in diversion and has experience working with youth and families
- Stringent record keeping and data collection to facilitate meaningful program evaluation
- Measures to ensure equal access and treatment to all eligible participants and to address any racial disparities
- Strong screening/assessment component at intake
- Comprehensive referral resources available for youth and families who need additional supports
- Ongoing training and education for all stakeholders, especially law enforcement

How can Youth Justice Project (YJP) support your MDP?

Youth Justice Project (YJP) works to support innovative programs, like MDPs, that keep youth out of the court system. We support MDPs by:

- ❖ Providing information and support to stakeholders interested in starting an MDP
- ❖ Partnering with existing MDPs in their implementation and expansion efforts
- ❖ Identifying and monitoring best practices for MDPs across the state
- ❖ Creation of resources and materials for use by MDPs
- ❖ Collecting and sharing MDP information and outcomes across districts

Want assistance with your MDP efforts?
Email us at youthjusticeproject@scsj.org.

You can also connect with us on Facebook (facebook.com/youthjusticenc), on Twitter (@youthjusticenc); or on our website youthjusticenc.org and southerncoalition.org.