

**INDIANA GUIDELINES FOR COUNTIES TO DEVELOP POLICY ON  
RESPONSES TO ELEVATED MAYSI-2 SCORES**

**INTRODUCTION**

As a participant in the Indiana Juvenile Mental Health Screening, Assessment and Treatment Pilot Project, each county site is required to develop its own policies pursuant to the *Protocol on Appropriate Policies and Procedures in Mental Health Screening, Assessment and Treatment of Youths in Detention, and other Pilot Project protocol documents*. These county level policies and procedures, as explained below, should do the following: (1) Provide an Overview of the Pilot Project and the MAYSI-2; (2) Adopt County Cut-off Criteria Mandating Responses by Detention Center (Either the State Mandatory Cut-off, or a More Protective Alternative); (3) Establish Required Responses for Youth with Elevated MAYSI-2 Scores; (4) Delineate the Administrative Process for Screening and Referring Youth for Follow Up Care in Detention; and (5) Establish Procedures to Maintain Mental Health Records Confidentially. Protocols outlining the county's policies and procedures must be approved by the State Advisory Board and Pilot Project Director before the MAYSI-2 program can be implemented as part of the Pilot Project.

**1. Overview of the Pilot Project and the MAYSI 2**

The county protocol should begin with an overview of the Pilot Project and the MAYSI-2. The Pilot Project may be explained briefly as an initiative to identify and procure services for youth in detention with serious mental health needs. This initiative involves the routine screening of youth for immediate mental health needs as they enter detention through a systematic use of the MAYSI-2. The Pilot Project protocols follow a medical records model, requiring county sites to adopt procedures to protect a youth's confidentiality.

The overview should also provide enough information so that an individual who is unfamiliar with the MAYSI-2 will know what the screen is and how it can and can not be used.

*FOR EXAMPLE:* "The MAYSI-2 is a standard and reliable self-report inventory designed to screen youths entering the detention center. Its purpose is to identify potential mental health or substance abuse issues that may need prompt attention. There are six scales for girls and seven scales for boys.

There is no "total" MAYSI-2 score. The Scoring Summary indicates whether the youth's score is above either of two critical scores, called the "Caution" (possible clinical significance) and "Warning" (the youth has scored exceptionally high in comparison to other youths in the juvenile justice system) cut-off scores. Scores on each scale are compared to the State Mandatory Cut-Off (or to a more protective, alternative cut-off criteria adopted by the county). Elevated scores indicate a youth may require closer staff supervision, additional questioning of the youth (Secondary Screening), brief counseling,

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or referral for an assessment or other mental health services per facility policies and procedures.

The MAYSI-2 can be scored and interpreted quickly without the expertise of a mental health professional; it is **not intended** to make psychiatric diagnoses or treatment decisions.”

### **2. Establishment of the County Cut-off Criteria Mandating Responses by Detention Center (Either by Adopting the State Mandatory Cut-off, or by Adopting a More Protective Alternative Cut-off Criteria)**

The MAYSI-2 is to be used to identify which youths should receive special attention or intervention as determined by the county as a matter of policy. That policy requires consideration of two broad questions:

- What cut-off scores will be used on what scales?
- What staff interventions will be made when youths exceed those scores?

The Indiana Juvenile Mental Health Screening, Assessment and Treatment Pilot Project State Advisory Board has adopted a State Cut-Off Criteria Mandating responses by Detention Centers for youth with elevated scores on the MAYSI-2. At a minimum, the State Mandatory Cut-off Criteria requires detention centers to respond to all youth scoring a Caution or Warning on the Suicide Ideation Scale, or 2 or More Warnings on any Combination of Scales. Please see: *Protocol on State Cut-Off Criteria Mandating Responses by Detention Centers*.

In the alternative, the Pilot Project protocols allow, and encourage, the counties to adopt a more protective criteria for the cut-off level triggering responses to elevated MAYSI-2 scores.

There are several potential cut-off criteria that a county site could use to identify youths for whom some sort of special attention or intervention should be made. Although the state protocol requires a Caution on the Suicide Ideation Scale as the cut-off, the county site has more flexibility for setting cut-off levels for other MAYSI-2 scales. The policy regarding responses for these other scales can be set for youth in different ways, such as:

- A Caution or Warning on at least one out of the six scales (out of five, for girls); or
- A Caution or Caution and Warning on at least any two out of the six scales; or
- On certain critical scales; or
- Some other combination, depending on county resources and policies.

The choice among these criteria will have two effects:

- Which cut off levels a county site chooses will make a difference in the number of youths to whom the system will have to respond with whatever type of special attention the system plans to provide; and

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- The choice will influence the degree of accuracy in identifying youths who are truly in need of attention or intervention.

Choosing what cut-off scores to use in a screening process such as the MAYSI-2 requires that the county consider the information listed above in light of three factors:

- Responsibilities;
- Responses; and
- Resources.

**Responsibilities:** Responsibilities are the detention centers' obligations to respond to the mental health needs of youths in its custody. Pursuant to state and federal law, detention authorities have a responsibility to address the mental health needs of youth admitted to their facilities. These requirements exist for two general reasons: (a) for the welfare of the youth who is in the detention center's care, and (b) for the protection and safety of other youth or detention center staff. Specifically, the Indiana Juvenile Detention Standards already require screening for both mental health problems and suicidal ideation/risk at entry. (210 IAC 6-3-4.238). As stated in the *Protocols for Administration of the MAYSI-2*, "The protocols set by the Advisory Board are not intended to replace these requirements, but rather to augment them." As a participant in the Pilot Project, each county has agreed, through its signed Letter of Commitment and Memorandum of Understanding, to adhere to Pilot Project protocols as it implements routine MAYSI-2 screening in its detention center.

**Responses:** Responses refer to the types of interventions that might be employed when youth are identified as having possible mental health needs. There are several types of interventions that detention centers can implement in response to youths whom the MAYSI-2 indicates have special mental health needs. These responses include, but are not limited to:

1. Therapeutic or Security Intervention: Detention center staff act to protect the youth or others from potential consequences of the youth's condition through increased monitoring or supervision; in some cases, this may even involve transferring the youth to a setting that can provide appropriate psychiatric services to meet the youth's immediate needs.
2. Secondary Screening: Secondary Screening is a brief, ancillary process that involves detention center staff asking exploratory questions about the sub-scale areas in which the youth scored high. This process can disconfirm or provide further evidence that the youth has the mental or emotional problem that the screen has identified. The MAYSI-2 Second Screening Forms are used to provide consistency and structure to this process, and should be followed when practical. For more information about this process, please see: *Protocols for the Administration of the MAYSI-2*

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3. Clinical Consultation: Detention center staff seeks expertise from clinical professionals who can intervene to provide brief evaluations or emergency care.
4. Evaluation Referral: Detention center staff arrange for a more comprehensive psychiatric or mental health evaluation to determine the nature and source of the youths self-reported distress or disturbance.

**Resources:** Resources are the financial and administrative support required to make the necessary responses or interventions. Detention centers must provide the resources to engage in appropriate responses to youths' mental health needs when to do so is necessary for meeting their responsibilities for a youth's welfare and the safety of others.

**Weighing the Three R's:** The MAYSI-2 cut-off scores that a county decides to use as its policy for triggering responses will reflect the weighing of all the above factors. The choice of a cut-off score will affect what proportion of youths the county identifies in relation to its responsibilities, which in turn will define the resources that are needed to respond in a way that meets those responsibilities. Difficult decisions must be made when resources are scarce. In such cases, the main questions are how to increase resources in the long-term, and, in the short-term, how to use existing resources in ways that will best meet the system's responsibilities. A key to resolving this dilemma is to recognize that some responses may be expensive while others may be relatively low in cost.

For example:

- While a "Caution cut-off" identifies a significant number of youths who must receive a response, the cost of Secondary Screening as the prescribed response is relatively low. Detention centers may wish to have a policy in place that requires more extensive intervention should the Secondary Screening indicate the need for it.
- "Warning cut-offs" might be used to signal the need for more extensive responses such as clinical consultation or referral for a comprehensive mental health evaluation.

For more information regarding cut-off criteria and responses, please see: *Protocol on State Cut-Off Criteria Mandating Responses by Detention Centers* and *Protocol for the Administration of the MAYSI-2*.

### **3. Required Responses for Youth with Elevated MAYSI-2 Scores**

The response to elevated scores section in the county protocol must explain the detention center's planned responses for youth with elevated MAYSI-2 Scores. This section must explain the response plan that will be followed when a youth scores a Caution or

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Warning on the Suicide Ideation Scale, providing details about how the actual response will be carried out (*e.g.*, referred for mental health evaluation, placed on suicide watch). Likewise, the response plan for a youth scoring 2 or more Warnings on any combination of scales (or scoring at an alternative cut-off criteria, if a more protective standard is adopted by the county) must be explained, being specific about details of the actual response. The protocol must require that actual responses be made in accordance with the established policies and procedures. Any changes to the center's follow up responses must be documented through an addendum or revision of the protocol, and approved by the Pilot Project Director.

Appropriate responses include implementation of safety precautions as well as referral to mental health or drug and alcohol professionals per center policies and procedures. The protocol must contain specific and detailed information about the response. The protocol must also list all staff positions that will have access to the scores and their specific responsibilities for following up on the results. This includes documentation of what follow-up action was taken.

### **4. Administration Process for Screening Youth in Detention**

Information about the administration process, such as when the youths are screened and who is responsible for conducting the screening must be included in the county protocol. Counties are encouraged to follow the comprehensive policy framework set forth in the *Protocol on Appropriate Policies and Procedures in Mental Health Screening, Assessment and Treatment of Youths in Detention* as they develop their own protocol on the screening administration process.

Examples of topics to include:

- All youth admitted to the center are screened within the first twenty-four hours.
- The MAYSI-2 is administered by the Site Coordinator or his/her designee. All staff must be trained in the administration of the MAYSI-2 prior to performing this screening.

For further discussion of the administration process, please refer to: *Protocols for the Administration of the MAYSI-2*.

### **5. Procedures to Maintain Confidentiality of Mental Health Records**

For information about procedures to maintain confidentiality of MAYSI-2 results, which include such topics as storage and dissemination of MAYSI-2 results within the detention center and release of results to outside individuals, please refer to: *Protocol on Appropriate Policies and Procedures in Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Treatment of Youths in Detention*.