

Indiana Guidelines for Introducing the MAYSI-2 to Youth

Introducing Youths to the MAYSI-2

Instruments like the MAYSI-2 must be introduced to youths appropriately. How youths respond to the questions on such instruments depends a lot on what they think the instrument is for. Therefore, when youths are approached to take the MAYSI-2, we recommend that the person giving the MAYSI-2 take one or two minutes to introduce youths to the MAYSI-2 by providing them information about it.

There is no single way to do this. Certainly this calls for something more than simply handing the form to them and saying, “Please complete this.” On the other hand, it does not require a lengthy or detailed description. What is needed is some basic information, offered in a positive, non-threatening manner and in a way that youths can understand. It is the goal of the Pilot Project that all youth in secure detention will be screened.

The wide range of ages of youths in juvenile justice facilities makes it difficult to write one “script” that would be understandable or appropriate for all youths. Moreover, conditions are different from one juvenile justice facility to another.

List of Things to Include in the Introduction

1. That the questions will help the staff understand the youth better.

Let youths know that you would like to give them a set of questions to answer that will help the staff to understand them better. Describe them as questions about who they are – their thoughts and feelings about things or themselves. Tell them this includes about 50 yes and no questions. The youth should be told that this helps the staff learn whether they might have special needs or require services that the staff should know about. References to the MAYSI-2 as a test should be avoided as youth may think this means there are right and wrong answers to the questions.

2. Who will or will not see the youth’s answers and use them for certain purposes.

Youth should be told who will see their answers and/or scores. According to the Pilot Project protocols, the specific questions and the youth’s actual answers will not be disclosed. The scores of the MAYSI-2 will be disclosed to the youth’s parents, a mental health provider, the court, probation, the youth’s attorney and the prosecutor only to the degree necessary to get any necessary evaluation or mental health treatment for the youth. In addition, if the youth discloses previously unreported child abuse or neglect, that information would be reported to the appropriate child welfare agency for the purpose of investigation.

If the youth asks, the youth should be advised that the screening answers and results may not be used against them to establish guilt in a juvenile delinquency hearing or criminal trial.

3. Voluntary nature of the MAYSI-2

Taking the MAYSI-2 is always “voluntary” in that youths may choose not to answer the questions and it is inappropriate to make their participation mandatory or to punish them for not answering. The MAYSI-2 is routine (like other health and identity questions) and intended only for the youth’s protection. The information is intended to help the staff in the program attend to youth’s immediate safety and need. The detention facility is expected, however, to follow precautionary measures, such as increased observation, and to pursue efforts to seek parental/guardian involvement, if mental health concerns are apparent with resistant youth. See also Protocol on Appropriate Policies and Procedures in Mental Health Screening, Assessment and Treatment of Youths in Detention; Protocols for the Administration of the MAYSI-2

4. Check for special needs of youth in completing the procedure

One the youth is ready to take the MAYSI-2, staff should assist the youth in getting started. If the program uses MAYSIWARE, this is a matter of entering the youth’s background information in the computer and then, after putting the headphones on the youth, sitting with the youth while the computer program is giving the youth the initial instructions about answering the questions on the keyboard. The staff person then steps aside when the youth begins to respond, so that the youth does not feel that the staff person is looking at the responses.