

“What is Diversion in Juvenile Justice and How Does it Work?”

Juvenile Court Judge’s Commission Annual Conference

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Presented By:

Josh Leskovac, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Mercer County
Chair, PACCJPOs Delinquency Prevention/Diversion Committee

Amanda Imboden, Intake Supervisor, Lehigh County Juvenile Probation

Susan K. Claytor, Deputy Director of Administrative Services, York County
Youth Diversionary Program Supervisor

Shawn Forbes, Assistant Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, Allegheny County

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Community Court Diversion Program Supervisor



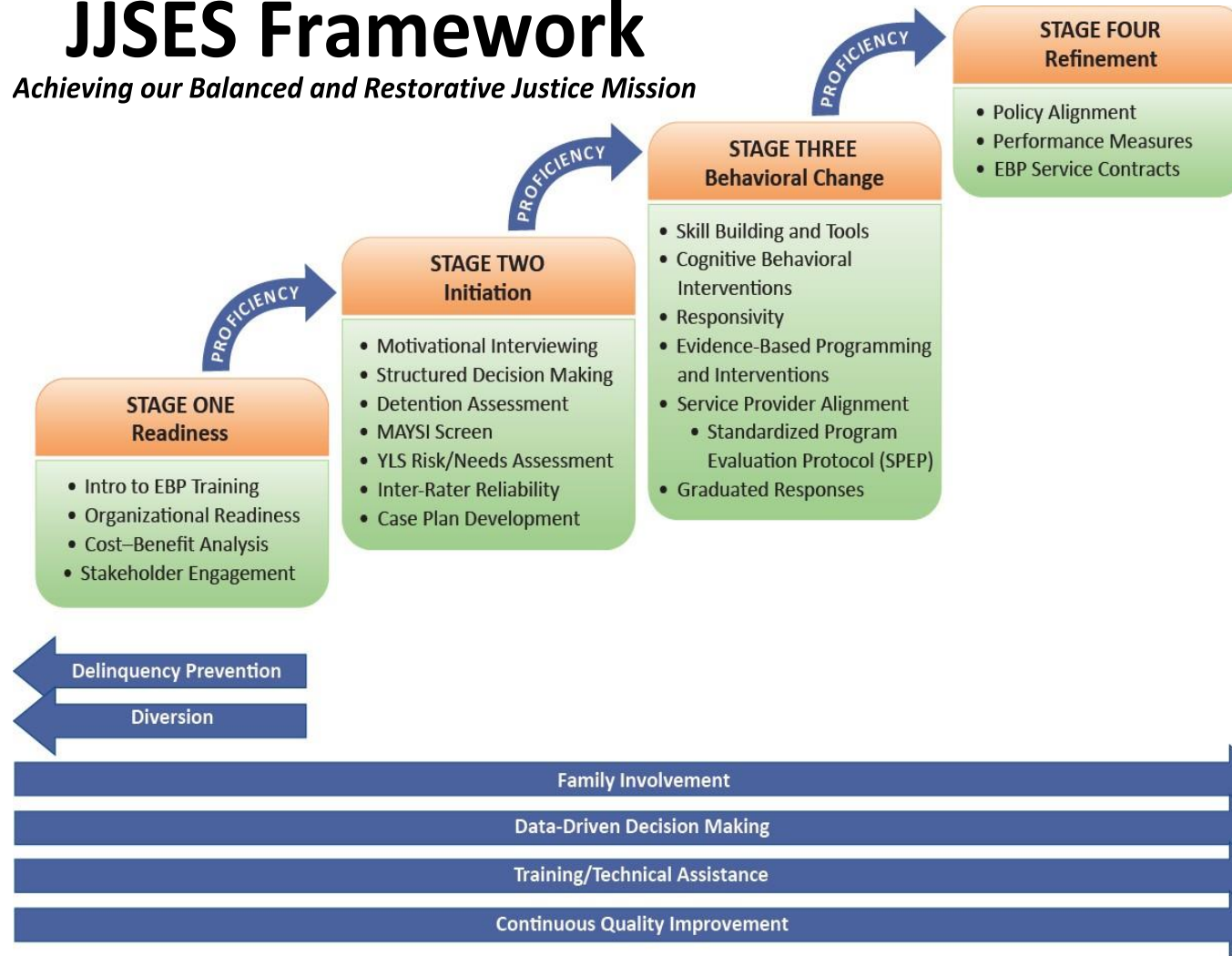
The Juvenile Justice System: A Brief Historical Perspective

- ▶ 1995 Special Session on Crime: Balanced and Restorative Justice
- ▶ MacArthur Foundation “Models for Change” 2005-2010
- ▶ Increased knowledge around “what works” in reducing recidivism/reducing harm
- ▶ Focus on Evidence-based practice and programs
- ▶ 2010 - JJSES is born

Adapted from: Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES) *Achieving our Balanced and Restorative Justice Mission Through Evidence-based Policy and Practice* - Richard D. Steele, courtesy of Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission.

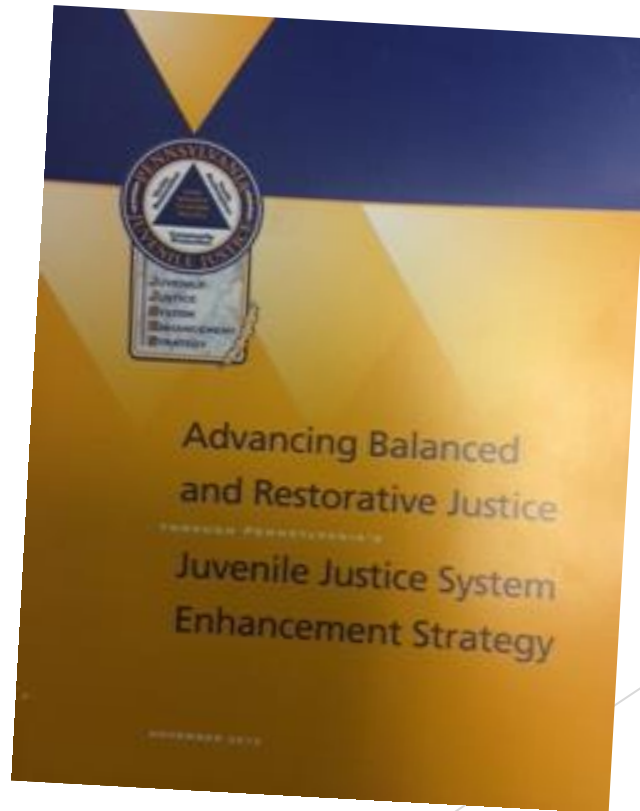
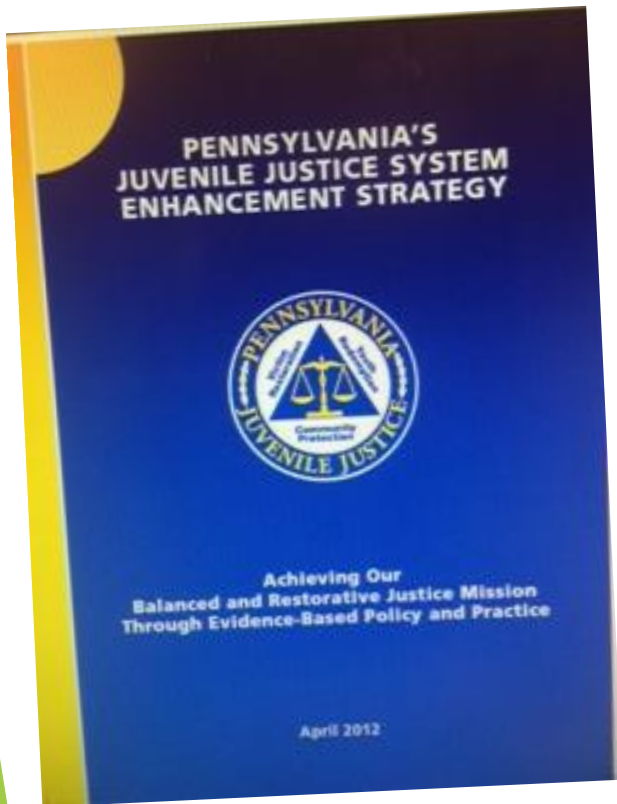
JJSES Framework

Achieving our Balanced and Restorative Justice Mission



Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy

<http://www.jcjc.pa.gov/Balanced-Restorative-Mission/Pages/SystemEnhancementStrategy.aspx>



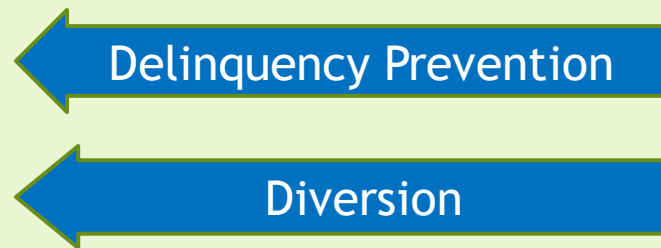
Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act Purpose Clause Revised in 2012

- ▶ §6301 (b) Purposes (3)(i)employing evidence-based practices whenever possible and, in the case of a delinquent child, **by using the least restrictive intervention** that is consistent with the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the rehabilitation, supervision and treatment needs of the child;...



PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation
Officer's Delinquency Prevention /
Diversion Committee
Established 2015

Establishing the Vision



PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officer's Delinquency Prevention/Diversion Committee

► Diversion Mission Statement:

“Consistent with our balanced and restorative justice mission, and recognizing diversion as part of the JJSES, the Delinquency Diversion Committee will work to identify best-practice, pre-adjudication alternatives to assist probation departments and stakeholders to redirect youth from further involvement in the juvenile justice system and avoid long term collateral consequences of formal adjudication.



Youth Redemption
Victim Restoration
Community Protection



Pursuing Balanced and Restorative Justice

Diversion Definition

- ▶ **“Juvenile diversion is an intervention strategy, which may occur at various formal and informal contact points, that redirects youth away from traditional processing and deeper juvenile justice involvement while still holding them accountable for their actions.**



Youth Redemption
Victim Restoration
Community Protection



Pursuing Balanced and Restorative Justice

PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers (PACCJPOs) Delinquency Prevention/Diversion Committee:

Diversion Strategic Plan 22/23

Goal: Community Protection

- ▶ Objective: Increase implementation and use of diversion that addresses community protection
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Assist in the development of diversion programs and policies based on best practices.

Goal: Accountability

- ▶ Objective: Increase implementation and use of diversion that addresses youth accountability
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Assist in the development of diversion programs and policies based on best practices.

Goal: Competency Development

- ▶ Objective: Increase implementation and use of diversion that addresses competency development (skills, knowledge, and attitudes)
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Assist in the development of diversion programs and policies based on best practices
 - ▶ **Activity 2:** Identify diversion programming and practices to effectively develop competencies

PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers (PACCJPOs) Delinquency Prevention/Diversion Committee:

Diversion Strategic Plan 22/23 (Continued)

Goal: Employ evidence-based practices at every phase of the juvenile justice process

- ▶ Objective: Increase awareness and use of evidence-based practices in diversion
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Provide educational resources on diversion to stakeholders.
 - ▶ **Activity 2:** Ensure fundamental fairness in decision-making
 - ▶ **Activity 3:** Research & disseminate information on funding implementation of diversion

Goal: Collect data necessary to measure results of juvenile justice initiatives/activities

- ▶ Objective: Analyze data to determine the use and effectiveness of diversion
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Develop methods to collect data on diversion
 - ▶ **Activity 2:** Identify existing program availability and gaps via JJSES Implementation Survey to ensure an adequate range of services for youth

Goal: Advance professional development

- ▶ Objective: Increase training opportunities on diversion for juvenile justice stakeholders
 - ▶ **Activity 1:** Identify resources and offer training to stakeholders on diversion

Governor-Appointed Juvenile Justice Task Force (Dec. 2019)

- ▶ Task Force Report released 2021
- ▶ Key Findings:
 - ▶ Most young people enter the juvenile justice system for low-level behavior
 - ▶ Despite its success, diversion is underutilized
 - ▶ Young people with low level cases end up on probation and in residential placement
 - ▶ Youth spend years out of home and under court supervision, on average
 - ▶ Only 20% of spending on delinquency services is allocated to services for youth living at home
 - ▶ The likelihood that similarly situated youth of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, or youth in different counties, receive the same response from the system varies widely—even for nearly identical behavior
 - ▶ Some of the largest racial disparities exist for Black Non-Hispanic youth—especially boys—who receive the most punitive responses

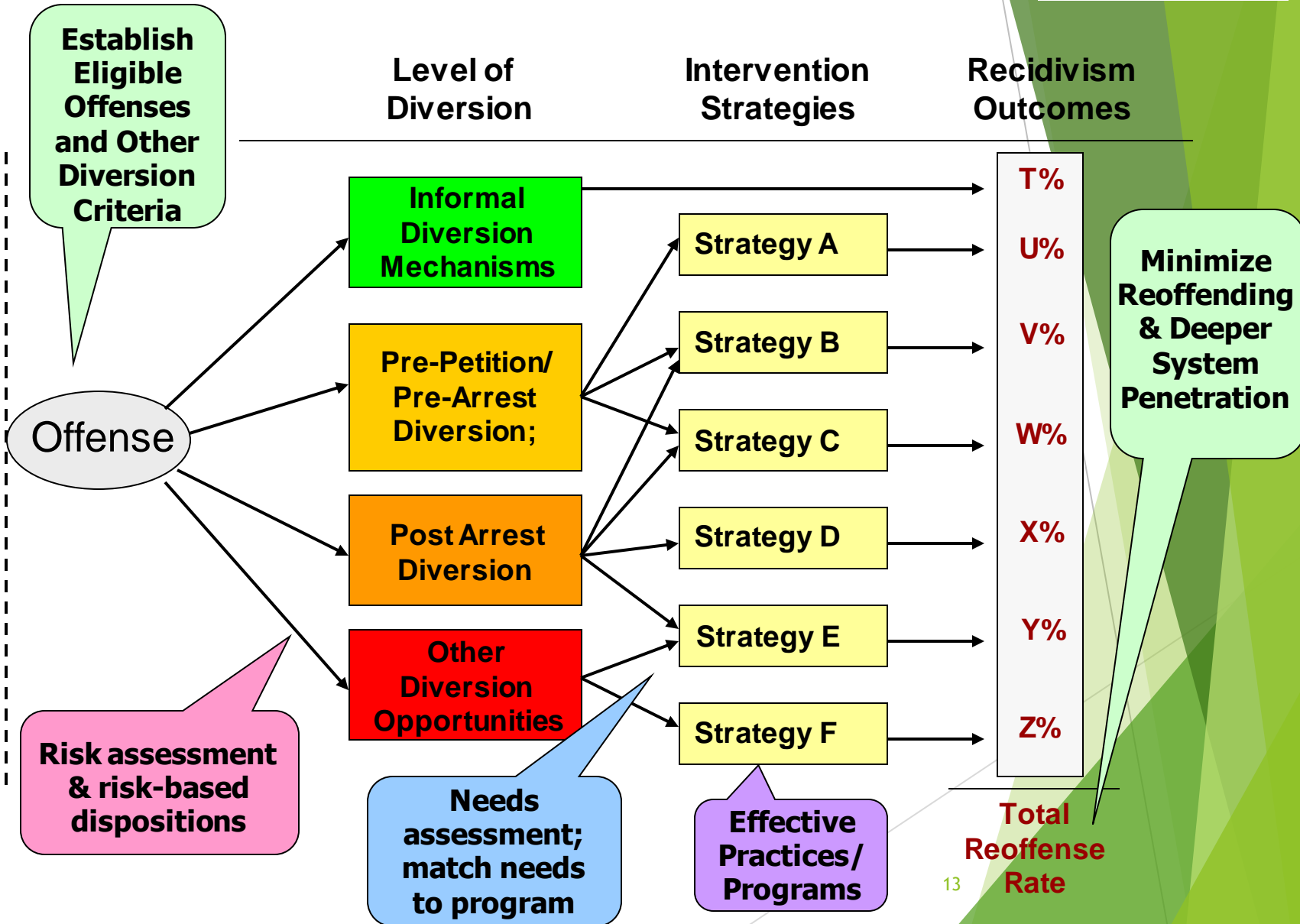




Juvenile Justice Task Force Recommendations (Diversion-Related)

Reinvest in	Recommendation #1: Reinvest in non-residential evidence-based practices (includes investment in diversion services)
Raise	Recommendation #8: Raise minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction
Expand	Recommendation #10: Expand services as alternatives to arrest and court referral
Expand and standardize	Recommendation #11: Expand and standardize school-based diversion
Prohibit	Recommendation #12: Prohibit written allegations in juvenile court for failure to comply in MDJ
Expand and standardize	Recommendation #13: Expand and standardize informal adjustment and other pre-petition diversion and tailor criteria for post-petition diversion.

Intercept Points for Diversion



Amanda Imboden, Intake Supervisor, Lehigh County Juvenile Probation

- School Justice Panel
- Community Justice Panel
- Informal
Adjustments/Consent
Decrees





Susan K. Claytor
Deputy Director of
Administrative
Services,
York County
Juvenile Probation

Youth Diversionary
Program (YDP)

- Formerly Youth Aid Panel
- Est. 1997
- Remodeled in 2021



Shawn Forbes, Assistant Chief JPO, Allegheny County Juvenile Probation

- Pre-Arrest Diversion
 - Post-Arrest Diversion

Sharlee Beatty,
Community Specialist,
Mercer County
Juvenile Probation

- Community Court
ESTABLISHED 1999



Mercer County Community Court Objectives

- ▶ Reduce the number of delinquent children entering the Juvenile Justice System
- ▶ Swifter Justice
- ▶ Engage the community in an accountability driven partnership

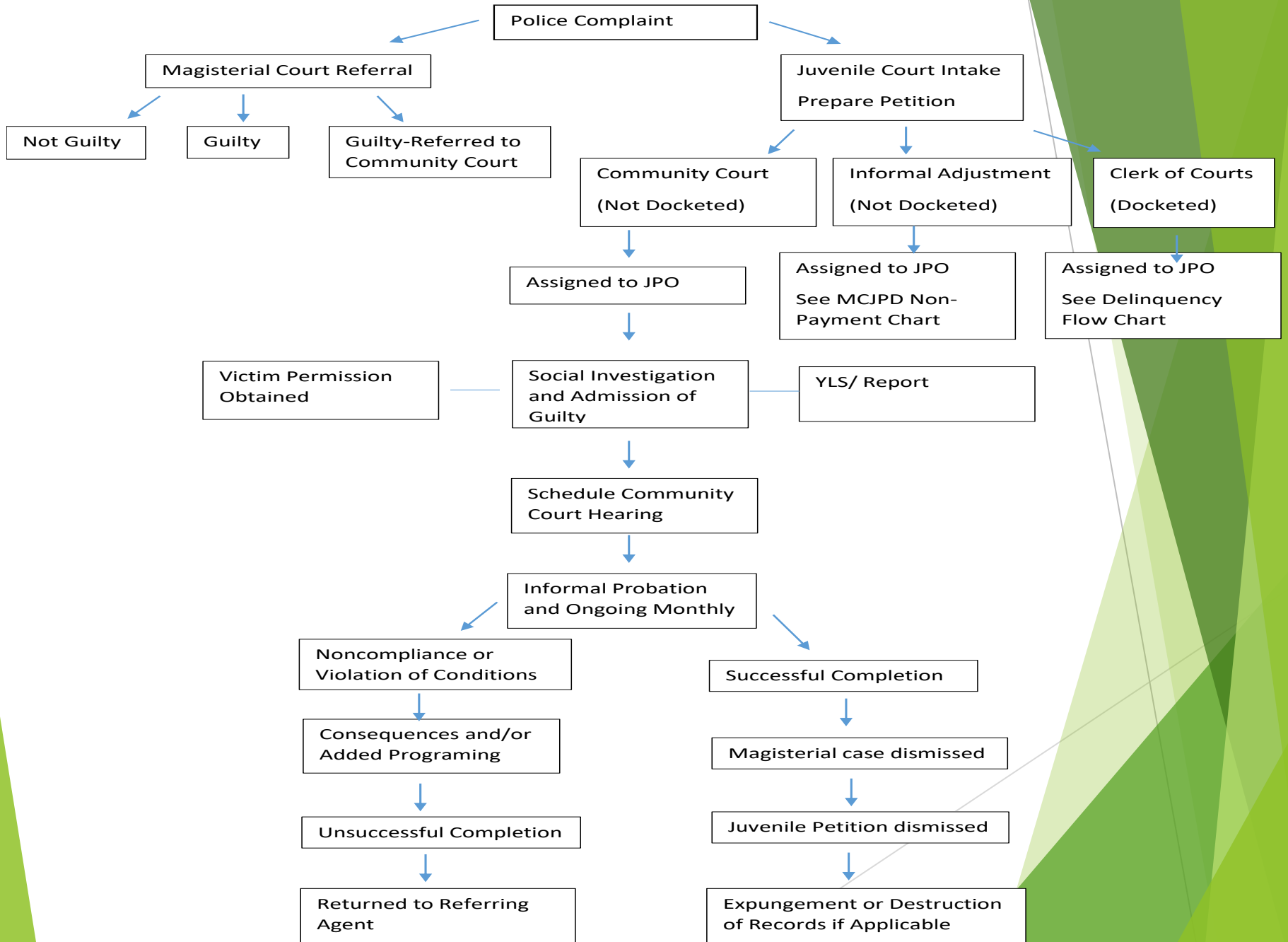


Mercer County Community Court Overview

- ▶ Responsibilities and Organization of the Community Court
- ▶ Offenses and Handling of Referrals
- ▶ Community Court Case Criteria
- ▶ Disposition of Case
- ▶ Development and Recruitment of Community Court Committees
- ▶ Community Court Volunteer Responsibilities



Community Court Flow Chart



For More Information...

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