

SPEP™ Task Matrix: PA's Guide for Stakeholder Preparedness

Statement of Purpose

In support of [Pennsylvania's Balanced and Restorative Justice](#) (BARJ) mission and as an integral component of the [Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy](#) (JJSES), the assessment of services through the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

- Strives to improve the quality of service delivery to juvenile justice involved youth;
- Assists in the matching of the right service to the right youth for the right amount of time;
- Focuses on services for moderate to very high risk youth;
- Engages service providers and juvenile probation in a collaborative effort to improve services through the flexible development of a performance improvement plan; and
- Recognizes that locally developed programs and their services can be equally effective as those supported by research.

Introduction

The goal of the SPEP™ process in Pennsylvania is intended to focus on continuous improvement of juvenile justice services in order to reduce recidivism. The Standard Program Evaluation Protocol Lifecycle shown below represents a process of assessing locally-developed and research-based services to see how well they align with the research-proven characteristics of effective programs.

The Standard Program Evaluation Protocol Lifecycle

This document serves as a step-by-step guide to SPEP™™, beginning with county adoption of SPEP™ through the completion of performance improvement goals and in preparation for SPEP™ reassessment (see lifecycle below). The Task Matrix is comprehensive and not necessarily all inclusive. Details of implementation will vary among stakeholders depending on the context and capacity of each probation department. However, many aspects of adopting and implementing SPEP™ should be very similar across Pennsylvania.

Readiness and Stakeholder Engagement

Training and education is a key component of the Readiness and Stakeholder Engagement for SPEP™ implementation. This includes the Key Leader Orientation (KLO) and the Kickoff Meeting, which will assist with service provider and other stakeholder buy-in of the SPEP™ process. EPISCenter Juvenile Justice System Improvement Specialists (JJSIS) assist with training, education, data collection and technical assistance throughout the SPEP™ process.

The SPEP™ certification process includes SPEP™ initial training, shadowing and facilitation that will begin once the assigned juvenile probation officer is identified.

The **KLO** is smaller, more intimate, "...meeting between local stakeholders and EPISCenter JJSIS staff that provide an overview of the SPEP™ research, how the SPEP process works and its benefits. The KLO is an opportunity for inner circle stakeholders and decision makers to ask questions and provide support for SPEP™ before an official announcement is made to the county."

The **Kickoff** "...serves as the official announcement to the county stakeholders that the roll out of SPEP™ process has been initiated. In addition to contracted service providers, invitees should include juvenile court judges, juvenile probation staff, representatives from the district attorney's and public defender's offices, local defense attorneys if appropriate, and other local juvenile justice stakeholders."

Juvenile probation staff should consider developing a dispositional matrix or Continuum of Services, which identifies all of the community-based and residential programs the county utilizes for court involved youth. The dispositional matrix or Continuum of Services will also help to identify gaps in service for the levels of risk and needs, as well as services for special populations.

The **Key Leader Orientation** (KLO) is a meeting between local stakeholders and EPISCenter JJSIS staff that provide an overview of the SPEP™ research, how the SPEP™ process works and its benefits. The KLO is an opportunity for inner circle stakeholders and decision makers to ask questions and provide support for SPEP™ before an official announcement is made to the county. Logistics for the SPEP™ Kickoff Meeting (date, times, meeting format, presenters, content, etc.) are decided during this meeting as well.

The **Kickoff Meeting** serves as the official announcement to the county stakeholders that the roll out of SPEP™ process has been initiated. In addition to contracted service providers, invitees should include juvenile court judges, juvenile probation staff, representatives from the district attorney's and public defender's offices, local defense attorneys if appropriate, and other local juvenile justice stakeholders. The EPISCenter JJSIS will be present to assist or participate in the presentation, answer questions, etc. The structure of the Kickoff meeting will be determined by the county juvenile probation department, and presentation content should be tailored to meet the needs and requests identified during the KLO. The Kickoff Meeting format can vary. The intent is to provide a clear, concise and consistent message about SPEP™ to all attendees, and allow time for questions and answers following the presentation(s).

County specific data is valuable to have during these meetings as it will be used as a reference when a rollout plan is developed. This data includes, but is not limited to, a list of youth that were court ordered to participate in programs, their YLS score, and if the dates the youth attended the program.

The SPEP™ Process

The SPEP™ Process serves as the launching ground for probation, service providers and the EPISCenter JJSIS. It prepares practitioners for the SPEP™ process, including the SPEP™ interview, scoring, and performance improvement.

The JPO and the EPISCenter JJSIS prioritize the programs/services that will participate in the SPEP™ process. Service providers with whom a good collaborative relationship exists, and/or agencies that are interested in participating in SPEP™ should be prioritized. It is recommended that community-based programs be considered for SPEP™ prior to residential programs because they are less complex. The Continuum of Services will also assist the JPO and JJSIS to prioritize the next provider to go through the SPEP™ process.

The service provider can prepare for the interview by gathering items recommended on the SPEP™ Pre-Visit Checklist. As part of the process, the provider should have available information on the program(s) to assist with the preparation of the Full Program Profile, described as a breakdown of what the service provider offers. During the SPEP™ interview, the JPO, provider, and EPISCenter JJSIS work collaboratively to ensure there is a clear understanding of the services the provider offers and how they connect to the elements of SPEP™.

The JPO and EPISCenter JJSIS utilize the program’s daily schedule in addition to the SPEP™ interviews to classify all of the services offered by the program and match them, when possible with research-based SPEP™ Service Type Categories. Once the Full Program Profile is complete, the JPO, provider and EPISCenter JJSIS collaborate to determine which service(s) will go through the SPEP™ process. It is recommended that 3-5 primary services be prioritized from each program to complete the SPEP™ process. When prioritizing services for SPEP™, considerations should include:

- The majority or most youth in the program receive the service;
- Service types that have the greatest potential for reducing recidivism;
- Service provider and stakeholder preference; and
- Services that are most aligned with the rationale for referring the youth to that agency

In addition to service type categorization, the interview includes questions related to the quality of service delivery. Data on the amount of service and youth risk levels are then collected. A data collection spreadsheet template has been developed to be used for SPEP™ in Pennsylvania to track youth data.

The JPO and EPISCenter JJSIS must have consensus in order to calculate a SPEP™ score for the service(s) selected to go through the SPEP™ process. The information gathered by the JPO and EPISCenter JJSIS during the interview(s) and data collection process result in the creation of a feedback report which includes performance improvement recommendations based on findings. The Feedback Report also details the strengths of the program, and how the score was generated. The Feedback Report is presented to the service provider upon completion of the assessment process. During the Feedback Report meeting the provider, JPO and EPISCenter JJSIS discuss opportunities for performance improvement.

System Improvement

Upon the review of the Feedback Report, the service provider and juvenile probation department collaborate to determine improvement priorities. Together they develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP is reviewed and finalized by the service provider, JPO and the EPISCenter JJSIS. Together, this team will work to achieve the goals of the PIP. The JPO, service provider, and EPISCenter JJSIS will have quarterly discussions to review PIP progress and next steps. They can collaborate more often if needed.

Once the goals of the PIP are met, data can be collected for a new cohort, and a SPEP™ reassessment (subsequent SPEP™) of the service can occur.

Next Steps

This Task Matrix that follows should be utilized as a guide to help prepare, plan and implement the rollout of SPEP™ in Pennsylvania counties. For more information on SPEP™, please visit the website <http://epis.psu.edu/spep> and Vanderbilt’s website <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/SPEP™/>.

