

MISDEMEANOR SERVICES



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OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM:

Misdemeanor Services was created in 2016 in an effort to reduce the number of adjudicated low to moderate risk from being placed on probation and thus decreasing their likelihood of penetrating further into the Juvenile Justice system. This program was designed to offer a shorter term strength and relationship-based supervision program with a focus on building resilience using a Positive Youth Justice (**PYJ**) framework. The program was designed to last 90 days, with an option to extend for an additional 30 day period. However, each youth is different and the program is designed to meet the youth and families where they are and some youth may be ordered to continue in Misdemeanor services for a longer period of time. Youth who need access to services and activities, minimum supervision, and who would benefit from a short term relationship with a positive adult, may be appropriate candidates for Misdemeanor Services. Youth adjudicated on either low-level, non-violent felonies or on misdemeanor/s have successfully completed the Misdemeanor Services program.

Misdemeanor Services seeks to ensure public safety, support families and motivate youth to reach their full potential. Youth are referred by a Magistrate or Judge to the Misdemeanor Services program and assigned to a Case Officer.

The case officer meets with the parent and youth for an intake appointment and then meets regularly (minimum of 2x per month) with the youth. Each youth has a case plan which is created in collaboration with the guardian and case officer and covers all four components of the Misdemeanor Services program. The four components of the program are as follows:

- 1) Youth Services and Needs (includes court orders, if applicable).
- 2) Restorative Justice.
- 3) Positive Youth Activities.
- 4) Relationship-building with a positive adult.

Every youth in the Misdemeanor Services program is screened for mental health and substance abuse issues using the Strength-based GAIN short-screener. In addition, youth and families are screened for basic needs (ie. food, shelter, health) using the public health screener. All youth at risk for human trafficking also complete a FOCUS assessment and are referred for local human trafficking support services, if needed.

Each youth is also encouraged to complete at least one Restorative Justice activity as a way of making amends for their delinquent behavior. If at all possible, the restorative justice component should be logically related to the incident which led to the referral to Misdemeanor Services. Some examples of restorative justice activities are: Empathy letter- asks youth to think about the impact of their behavior on the victim/community; Community Service hours- allows youth to learn how to support and restore their community.; Educational opportunity- youth reads a book, watches a movie, video or listens to a podcast and completes a related activity with their case officer.

Next, youth are encouraged to participate in at least two positive activities. They are asked to

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complete an interest and career goal survey and case officers help the youth identify specific activities which teach youth a new skill and/or offer the youth an opportunity to do something to further their career goals. Case officers have taken youth to the following: meetings with a college counselor, Crafting to Calm art sessions, Boxing, Toledo Bikes, Toledo Art Museum classes, gym workouts, teen support groups, library activities and hair braiding sessions.

Case officers are encouraged to meet the youth where they are, remain strength-focused and think outside the box to come up with meaningful activities and community services. The final component of the program is for the youth to develop a healthy positive relationship with their case officer and every effort is made to achieve this goal.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023:

- ♦ 61 youth were active in the Misdemeanor Services program during 2023.
- ♦ Of these youth, 45 were terminated successfully*, 9 were unsuccessful** and 1 was terminated other***. 6 youth were continued in the program for 2024.

*A youth who was terminated successfully has “substantially” complied with the program and has not been placed on a higher level of court supervision (ie. Probation, YTC or CTC)

**A youth who has was terminated unsuccessfully has not “substantially” complied with the program and has been placed on a higher level of court supervision.

***A youth who was terminated other was unable to complete the program because they moved out of the court’s jurisdiction.

REFORM AND IMPROVEMENTS IMPLEMENTED IN 2023:

The improvements made in 2023 to this program are as follows:

- ♦ A third case officer, Jessica Militzer was added to the team. She has brought some fresh ideas which have already improved family and youth engagement.

New Program forms have been created and are now in use:

- ♦ New Program flyer for families.
- ♦ Strength-based Parent Survey.
- ♦ Youth Interest and Career Survey.

Program case officers have also identified more community members, agencies and businesses who are willing to offer diverse options for job shadowing, skill building and competency development.■