

YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER
The Multi-Agency Collaborative for Safe and Healthy Youth (MACSHY)
Rockland County, NY
Joint Policy Initiative
October 3, 2014

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

The Rockland County, NY Multi-Agency Collaborative for Safe and Healthy Youth (MACSHY) has developed a Youth Safety Co-location Center (hereafter referred to as “the Center”) to coordinate the work of various Rockland County agencies to better integrate services that will identify at-risk youth and coordinate an effective response to address issues related to their safety.

The Center is comprised of staff assigned from various county agencies, including the Rockland County Departments of Mental Health, Probation, and Social Services, as well as the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

The Center will enhance the delivery of services by creating a structure that will facilitate a coordinated analysis of needs and make a more effective and complete response. The Center is not intended to duplicate or replace the activities of existing agencies, but rather to enhance their efforts by providing a capability that does not presently exist.

SECTION 2
THE VISION OF THE MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER

The Center was the idea of the MACSHY Collaborative Work Group, which articulated its vision statement as: “Safe and Healthy Youth.”

This vision builds upon years of work done by various Rockland County agencies working to coordinate services and improve outcomes for youth. Now, with the leadership of the District Attorney’s Office and its focus on prevention strategies, the initiative can evolve to a more effective level.

SECTION 3
THE MISSION OF MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER

The MACSHY Collaborative Work Group also constructed a mission statement to guide its work:

The mission of the Center is to enhance the effectiveness of all public agencies working in support of safe and healthy youth by developing a community-wide system to identify those in need of services, and to coordinate the services provided to maximize their effectiveness.

SECTION 4 THE GOAL OF THE MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER

The goal of the Center will be to provide a centralized, comprehensive, multi-agency network that will enhance the operational effectiveness and efficiency of all agencies in Rockland County that have responsibility for, or interact with, children and families faced with serious safety and mental health issues.

To meet that goal Rockland County agencies will assign staff members who will identify, coordinate, and enhance the *tactical* (immediate) response on a case-by-case basis. They will identify the deficiencies in the service systems so the county can develop a *strategic* (long term) response plan to better provide wraparound services to children, youth, and families in need.

The Center will strive to furnish a responsive service intended to provide meaningful and trustworthy direction to address the needs of youth and their families. The Center will also give decision-makers information about complex issues related to supplying effective services, as well as provide insight into overcoming obstacles to providing those services.

The Center's services will be designed to foster a cooperative environment for providing services throughout the County of Rockland. In addition, the Center will strive to provide services applicable to all service providers, including the private sector, with a focus on youth health and safety, as well as to provide services applicable to the general public for education on issues related to the safety of youth.

SECTION 5 THE PURPOSE OF THE MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER

The purpose of the Center is to support local agencies in detecting, preventing, and responding to issues related to youth safety and health on a case-by-case basis. The Center will co-locate representatives of the social service, mental health, criminal justice, and education arenas on a full time basis in the same facility to achieve increased progress in identifying and addressing the needs of the child/family, to coordinate an effective response thereto, and to facilitate joint efforts to prevent and to solve issues related to youth health and safety.

The Center is a voluntary joint venture of its participating agencies formed to foster greater integration and overall effectiveness of the county-based service agencies through active collaboration and the exchange of essential information. The Center will rely upon agency members and contributing partners to perform field activities. The Center will help shape and influence response strategies used by member agencies and liaison partners.

The staff of the Center will not have policy-making authority. That is the purview of the MACSHY Executive Committee, defined below. However, it is expected that the Center, by performing the functions elaborated below, will both inform and influence the relevant policy-making processes of key agency officials and existing interagency forums.

SECTION 6

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER

The Center will rely on full-time staff and extensive interagency consultations to integrate all of the relevant perspectives on the related problems of youth health and safety.

The Center will perform the following principal functions:

1. Promote Cooperative Collaborative Relationships. The Center will actively promote cooperative relationships with other service agencies as determined to be necessary to address identified issues and needs of the clients.

The Executive Committee defined in Section 8 below shall determine the nature and scope of the information that can be shared among the Center’s participating agencies and shall provide concise guidelines and policies for the Center, in accordance with applicable privacy laws of the participating agencies. The Center will also encourage agencies to disseminate actionable information to all officials and agencies in a position to make effective executive decisions.

Information provided to the Center and other recipients (in accordance with applicable law) is to be used to develop potential responses.

2. Prepare Strategic Assessments. The Center will prepare periodic strategic assessments. All such assessments will be provided to the relevant agencies and interagency centers and organizations, as appropriate.

3. Identify Issues for Possible Enhanced Interagency Coordination or Attention. The Center will identify issues that might benefit from enhanced interagency coordination or attention. These issues will be referred to the relevant agencies and/or interagency bodies for consideration and action, as appropriate.

Functions of the Center include:

1. Identify children/families that are involved in multiple systems in Rockland County and in need of a coordinated response from various agencies to address a developing or crisis situation.
2. Determine what may be needed to address the needs of students and families using resources from various agencies and community organizations, including agencies from outside the Center.
3. Ensure that the issues are addressed and that there is follow-up and liaison with community resources.
4. Identify gaps in providing necessary services and protocols in the county.
5. Analyze all available information to identify actionable responses, both tactical and strategic.

SECTION 7

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CO-LOCATED AND LIAISON AGENCIES

Co-located Agencies:

Sample Responsibilities:

The Rockland County Probation Department	Identify at-risk behaviors and any services needed.
The Rockland County Department of Social Services	Identify needs and gaps in services, including immediate needs such as housing and food.
The Board of Cooperative Educational Services	Identify students who are fragile, not connected to school (and may have a family history of school failure).
The Rockland County Department of Mental Health	Identify substance abuse, acting out, and other behavioral health issues.

Liaison Agencies:

Responsibilities:

The Rockland County District Attorney’s Office	Act as liaison to the Center for the criminal justice process beyond the authority of the Department of Probation. The District Attorney’s Office also assists in leveraging the authority of the criminal justice system to ensure the effective delivery of services by the Center’s co-location agencies.
The School Resource Officers	Act in partnership, as requested, by schools.
The Police Department Youth Bureaus	Act in partnership with all agencies associated with youth safety and health.

**SECTION 8
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MACSHY YOUTH SAFETY CO-LOCATION CENTER**

A. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for adding or otherwise adjusting participation of the member agencies participating in the Center.

B. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Center.

C. Members. The Executive Committee shall initially be comprised of the Chief Executive Officer of each participating agency or their designee, plus the District Attorney, each of whom shall serve without compensation, as follows:

1. The Rockland County District Attorney
2. The Rockland County Commissioner of Social Services
3. The Rockland County Commissioner of Mental Health
4. The Superintendent of the Rockland County Board of Cooperative Educational Services
5. The Director of the Rockland County Probation Department

D. Term of Office. All members of the Executive Committee shall serve for terms of office that correspond to the individual's duty assignment as head of a Center member agency, or as the District Attorney.

E. Meetings of the Executive Committee. All meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held at the office of the Chair of the Committee or at such other place as shall be stated in the notice of the meeting.

1. Regular and Special Meetings: The Executive Committee will meet on a quarterly basis, or more frequently, as deemed necessary by a majority vote of the Executive Committee. The Director of the Center may request special meetings with the Executive Committee.

2. Quorum: A majority of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Executive Committee, provided that, if less than a majority of such number of members is present at such meeting, a majority of the members present may adjourn the meeting from time to time without further notice. The members present at a meeting duly called and convened may continue to transact business until adjournment, notwithstanding the withdrawal of enough members to leave less than a quorum.

3. Voting: The action of the majority of the Executive Committee present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the action of the Executive Committee, unless the concurrence of a greater proportion is required for such action by this charter except that any adopted policy regarding the release of agency information must have the affirmative vote of the Chief Executive Officer of such agency in addition to a majority vote of the Executive Committee.

SECTION 9 BUDGET

Each of the Rockland County agencies participating in the Center will bear any personnel costs related to their staff members working at the Center, e.g. salaries, benefits, and overtime costs.

Costs related to office space will be covered by the host agency. Other costs, such as printer and photo copier, paper and other office supplies may be provided by the host agency or other participating agencies (although staff members from the non-hosting agency are encouraged to bring office supplies they would normally use from their home agency). If there are costs associated with accessing computer networks (e.g. Probation and DSS are on separate New York State systems) those respective agencies will bear those costs, such as wireless data cards.

As of September 2014 no new funding is available to staff positions for the Center so each agency director must re-assign existing staff who would maintain their caseloads while at the Center.

SECTION 10 STAFF

Staff members appointed to the Center will be assigned by each agency director. Staff will report to their supervisor of their home agency, as usual, and follow procedures of that agency, e.g. signing in and out.

Problems that may arise during operation of the Center will be addressed by the respective agency supervisors and resolved as expeditiously as possible. Staff members of the Center are encouraged to work together to resolve any problems, if possible.

A Center “coordinator” or team leader will be assigned to play a coordinating role, defining issues that need to be directed to the MACSHY Executive Committee. The job description of the coordinator’s role states that the coordinator must have:

- demonstrated knowledge of multi-system responses to youth in need of services;
- the ability to articulate issues that need to be decided by the Executive Committee of the Center;
- the ability to work effectively with partners from different agencies;
- the ability to perform work in various locations (e.g. staff must be able to do as much of their regular functions as possible at the Center so that they are physically present when they are not demanded elsewhere, for example when a Probation staff member needs to appear in court).

SECTION 11 OFFICE SPACE AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT

Office space will be provided by the host agency. Equipment such as computers, printers and photo copier, as well as paper and office supplies, may be provided by the host agency or participating agencies (although—as indicated in the Budget section above—staff members from the non-hosting agency are encouraged to bring office supplies they would normally use from their home agency). Technical support associated with accessing computer networks will be provided by the respective agencies.

Access to the Center will be controlled by the host agency and its policies, which will grant access to the designated staff following satisfactory security screening.

SECTION 12 LEGAL COMPLIANCE

The signatories party to the Center acknowledge that each and all of the Rockland County agencies remain individually responsible for complying with the laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to their specific operations.

Legal issues and questions that arise in the course of the Center's activities will be referred to the appropriate legal advisors for each of the member agencies.

Regarding liability, agencies assume no additional liability to their agency by virtue of co-location. Each participating agency will not assume liability for the actions of the Center's personnel not employed by that agency. Attorneys for the agencies will examine any additional liability or other legal issues, including questions related to the presence of security guards at the Center.

SECTION 13 PRIVACY

The Center's work will benefit youth at risk and their families, as well as those who provide community-based services to them through greater multi-system coordination and integration. Respecting the privacy rights of individuals according to federal and state and local laws is of paramount importance. The Executive Committee, which governs the Center, will work to ensure that privacy rights will be protected according to these laws.

Data storage will occur on the computer/computer system of each agency staff member of the Center. Each agency will follow its own regulations regarding the storage of private and confidential information. Only necessary staff will have access to records. Measures will be put into place so that information is secured in a manner dictated by the level of data gathered.

The confidentiality rights of clients who may be served at the Center will be respected by offering a private room for sessions requiring privacy.

SECTION 14 DATA COLLECTED AND ACCESSED

Agencies will determine the kind of data they will collect through their work at the Center, within their exclusive discretion. Each agency will define the kinds of data to be collected. For example:

- BOCES may collect data related to school attendance, suspension and expulsion, referrals to other providers, etc.
- Probation may collect data related to PINS and Juvenile Delinquency (JD) referrals including intake, adjustment, diversion, referrals to Court, dispositions, etc.
- Mental Health may collect information related to admissions, diagnoses, units of service, referrals, discharges, etc.
- Social Services may collect data related to placements, PINS referrals, cases filed by school districts, etc.

The staff of the Center will work in concert with the Executive Committee to develop uniform and consistent data collection by the agencies staffing the Center. The staff of the Center may make recommendations to the Executive Committee for policies and procedures for collecting and sharing information and data to ensure that the information that is needed to help youth is obtained, and that privacy laws are respected.

Access and use of records will be in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and the policies and procedures of each agency. It is anticipated that policies and procedures will evolve to facilitate the flow of information to more effectively help youth and their families, while respecting all pertinent privacy laws.

**SECTION 15
DURATION**

The agencies are expected to begin their roles in the Youth Safety Co-Location Center upon the date the last undersigned participating agency representative signs this joint policy initiative. The Center is seen as a pilot, but the time frame of its operation is anticipated as being indefinite to address ongoing needs to more effectively help the youth and families of Rockland County.

**SECTION 16
WITHDRAWAL FROM THE POLICY INITIATIVE**

Any agency wishing to withdraw from its participation in the Youth Safety Co-Location Center is expected to give at least sixty (60) days prior written notice to the other participating agencies. Any agency, shall have the right to withdraw from, the MACSHY operation and upon withdrawing the other participating agencies will have no expectation of further participation from the withdrawing agency.

**SECTION 17
SIGNATURES**

In Witness Whereof, the participating parties acknowledge their intention to participate in the Youth Safety Co-Location Center by cooperating with the policies and procedures set forth herein as evidenced by their signatures below.

For the Rockland County Department of Social Services:

Signature _____ Date _____

For the Rockland County Department of Probation:

Signature _____ Date _____

For the Rockland County Department of Mental Health:

Signature _____ Date _____

For the Rockland County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES):

Signature _____ Date _____

For the Rockland County District Attorney's Office:

Signature _____ Date _____