



THE STANDARDIZED PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOL (SPEP)[®]

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) is a validated, data-driven rating system that assesses how well an existing program matches the research evidence regarding recidivism risk reduction. The SPEP is based on a meta-analysis of over 600 controlled studies of interventions with juvenile offenders conducted by Dr. Mark Lipsey and his colleagues over the last 20 years.

The SPEP is an example of how Pennsylvania is meeting the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JSES) Statement of Purpose. Use of the SPEP improves the system through:

- **Use of evidence or evidence based practices.** The SPEP helps probation officers match the right juveniles to the right service for the right amount of time;
- **Use of data.** The SPEP results are a reflection of service delivery quality and how the service is utilized by the juvenile court system; and
- **Continuous improvement.** Development of a performance improvement plan to implement recommendations that improve service quality and program use.

According to the research, the following four program factors are most strongly related to reducing recidivism:

- Program philosophy and type
- Quality of service delivery
- Amount of service
- Youth risk level and aggressive/violent history

SPEP focuses on assessing and improving service delivery in each of the above areas.

The SPEP process is outlined in the following sequence of events:



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The program characteristics most strongly related to reducing recidivism:

- **Type of service** is associated with recidivism reduction. SPEP identifies 14 therapeutic services, which are listed below. In addition, SPEP distinguishes the "primary" service or main theme of a program from the "supplemental" services that reinforce or enhance the primary service. Research indicates that non-therapeutic and control-oriented services (boot camps, scared straight programs, and programs that emphasize only surveillance) do not reduce recidivism and may actually increase recidivism.



- **Quality of the service delivery** refers to how a program is implemented. This element is measured by combining information about the program features below into a single rating for each program service that is to receive a SPEP score. Research has shown that programs that monitor quality improvement are more likely to have a positive impact on recidivism reduction. Monitoring of quality is defined by:
 - Written protocol or manual
 - Staff trained in the service and associated protocol
 - Monitoring the quality of the service delivery
 - Organizational procedures for responding to departures from the protocol
- **Amount of service** measures the duration or number of weeks a service is delivered, as well as the dosage or the numbers of hours youth receive the service. The actual amount of services is measured against the target amount of service in the appropriate SPEP service category. Youth should receive the targeted amounts (not less) to have the greatest impact on recidivism reduction. The chart below reflects examples of dosage and duration for a variety of service types. Please note that these figures are current, although subject to adjustment based on ongoing research.

DURATION & DOSAGE FOR SPEP SERVICE TYPES		
Service Type & Name of Service	Duration or Number of Weeks	Dosage or Number of Hours
Restorative Services		
Restitution/Community Service	12	60
Mediation	4	8
Counseling		
Individual Counseling	25	30
Mentoring	26	78
Family Counseling	20	30
Family Crisis Counseling	4	8
Group Counseling	24	40
Mixed Counseling	25	25
Skill Building Services		
Behavior Management	24	72
Cognitive-behavioral Therapy	15	45
Social Skills Training	16	24
Challenge Programs	4	60
Remedial Academic Program	26	100
Job Related Training		
<i>Vocational Counseling</i>	20	40
<i>Job Training</i>	25	400
<i>Work Experience</i>	26	520

- **Youth Level of Risk** – According to Dr. Lipsey’s research, the youth’s risk level (determined by the YLS) is the strongest predictor of recidivism. Youth should be matched to a service designed to address the risks/needs identified through the YLS. The score in this category is derived by reviewing the risk levels of youth receiving the service within a specified amount of time. This group of youth is referred to as the SPEP cohort.