

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES**

Subject: Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY)	Policy Number: 43
Number of Pages: 8	Section: SAVRY Professional Manual
Attachments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Social History Interview Form B. Case Supervision Form C. SAVRY Tracking Form D. SAVRY Case Audit Form E. Client Survey Form 	Related Standards & References:
Effective Date: Revised: June 1, 2015	Approved:  <hr/> James Maccarone, Director

PURPOSE

It is the policy of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services to use the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY); a validated risk assessment tool. The SAVRY is an evidence-based assessment designed to assist professionals in making judgments about a youth's risk for future general re-offending and violence and for identifying a youth's need for case planning. This assessment comprises 24 risk/need items that were identified from a review of existing research on adolescent development and on delinquency and aggression in youth. Six protective factors are included in the SAVRY that also have been identified by current research as potentially mitigating the risk of future violence and delinquent activity. The SAVRY utilizes a structured professional judgment method of assessment. The individual completing the assessment rates the youth on a number of evidence-based factors and then considers all the information to make a final judgment that the youth has a relatively low, moderate, or high risk for future violence and/or general recidivism.

The SAVRY is intended for pre-adjudication, disposition recommendations, and post-disposition case planning.

SAVRY is **not** intended for assessing risk for future sexual offending. It can be useful for assessing risk for future violence and general delinquency in youth.

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	2 of 8

DEFINITIONS

- A. Criminogenic Need – Needs of an individual that can lead to crime or delinquency.
- B. Youth Services/County Counselor – A Counselor employed by the State or County whose duties include preparing social history reports to the court and supervising youth under the court’s jurisdiction.
- C. Protective Factors – Factors that exist within an individual’s situation/circumstances that may mitigate a youth’s overall risk.
- D. Social History Report – A written report that is a thorough description and assessment of the youth, family and the events surrounding the offense, including recommendations for services and disposition. It is derived from multiple sources and is designed to assist the court in making a final disposition.
- E. Lead Counselor – A Counselor employed by the State or County who has been designated to review the social history reports and SAVRY recommendations prior to the results being given to the court.
- F. Quality Assurance – The systematic monitoring and evaluation of the SAVRY to ensure that the quality of standards is being met. This process will identify any areas of improvement and minimize errors.

PROCEDURE

The following guidelines should be followed when using the SAVRY with youth classified as formal for both delinquent and non-delinquent cases.

Time of Initial Assessment

The SAVRY must be administered within twenty business days (4 weeks) following case assignment to the Youth Services/County Counselor. It should be administered within the following time frames under the following circumstances:

- Pre-adjudication (within 20 business days of the counselor being assigned the case; however, if the adjudication hearing does not occur in a timely manner, the SAVRY must be re-administered within 90 days of the previous or with a significant event change in the life of youth)
- Post adjudication/ Pre-disposition (for disposition recommendations and case management planning in courts that do NOT administer the assessment pre-adjudication) within 15 business days (3 weeks) following adjudication. (the SAVRY must be re-administered within 90 days of the previous or with a significant event change in life of the youth)
- Post-disposition (within 20 business days (one month) following disposition for case-management in cases where no Social History Report is completed but the youth is placed on probation)

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	3 of 8

The lead counselor will monitor cases on a monthly basis to ensure the SAVRY is being completed on all youth within twenty days of case assignment.

The Social History Interview Form must be completed prior to rating the SAVRY. (See attachment A).

In order to guard against the risk of pre-adjudication self-incrimination by youth being assessed with the SAVRY, Youth Services/County Counselors should not discuss the details of the offense the youth is charged with when they are conducting the evaluation. The social history and the results of the evaluation should not be discussed pre-adjudication with the court or with attorneys without the express written consent of the youth's counsel.

Time of Reassessment

The purpose of the reassessment is to monitor changes in risk and service/supervision needs of the youth. As a general guideline, each youth should be re-assessed with the SAVRY no later than 180 days from disposition and no later than every 180 days thereafter until the probation period is concluded. A reassessment can be conducted every 90 days on high risk youth if the counselor deems it necessary. When only a few items will change on a reassessment, an addendum to the initial assessment can be completed. In addition, the SAVRY should be administered before any major changes in placement, monitoring, or supervision. The lead counselor will monitor cases on a monthly basis to ensure the SAVRY is being completed on all youth within twenty days of case assignment.

The SAVRY also should be administered when a major life-changing event occurs (e.g., commission of re-offense; major trauma experience; drug overdose). In such circumstances, the SAVRY would not be required again until six months following the most recent assessment.

All reassessments will be done with supervisory approval to ensure that the coordination of the reassessment is consistent.

Responsible Party

The person responsible for administering the SAVRY is the Youth Services/County Counselor who is assigned to the case.

Training Requirements and Qualifications for Use

Each Regional Director should designate at least two master trainers who receive extensive training on use of the SAVRY in the form of a two-day workshop with a SAVRY training expert. Master trainers also should complete a minimum of two to three additional standardized practice cases. More master trainers may be needed depending on the size of the region. More than one is essential due to potential turnover of master trainers.

Youth Services/County Counselors should only administer the SAVRY after completion of formal training in use of the instrument. Training should be received from an author of the SAVRY, another qualified trainer, or a designated master trainer. Generally, initial training involves a one to two day workshop that covers some of the research on delinquency (e.g., trajectories of offending, risk factors, need factors) and at least two practice scoring cases.

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	4 of 8

Staff should complete ratings for a minimum of two to three additional standardized practice cases following the initial training and should receive feedback on their ratings. Typically this is done in groups. This should occur prior to staff using the tool. Staff with more “incorrect” responses than average should receive individual feedback from a master trainer. The acceptable number of “incorrect” item ratings will be at the discretion of the master trainer.

Staff who are responsible for completing a SAVRY assessment should receive additional training within the region about the following: 1) the agency’s policy regarding when and for what cases the initial assessment and subsequent re-assessments are to be conducted, 2) how the results of the assessment are to be communicated in pre-adjudication, disposition recommendations and post-disposition reports, and 3) how the results of the assessment should be used to select appropriate service referrals, level of supervision for case planning, and ongoing case management.

Master trainers should conduct booster trainings in the region twice a year (generally every six months). Booster trainings can be accomplished in two ways: 1) using another standardized practice case that all staff complete and then receive feedback from the master trainers, or 2) making a presentation based on a case handled in the office and then having all staff rate the case and discuss the most appropriate ratings. Following the case presentation and discussion, the booster training should include a discussion about how the results of the assessment should be used for case management, including the disposition recommendation, service referrals in the case supervision plan, and appropriate level of probation supervision.

A staff member who has more than the acceptable number of “incorrect” item ratings at a booster training should receive individual feedback from the master trainers and should complete an additional case to discern whether there has been improvement. The acceptable number of “incorrect” item ratings will be at the discretion of the master trainer.

Method of Implementation

The Youth Services/County Counselor administering the SAVRY must follow the guidelines as described in the SAVRY Professional Manual. This includes determining ratings on a review of file information, face-to-face interview with the youth, usually an interview with the parent/guardian and collateral contacts. In the event that the parents/guardians cannot be interviewed, documentation of the circumstances must be provided. If a face to face interview cannot be scheduled, a telephone interview could be conducted with the supervisor’s approval. The Youth Services/County Counselor must utilize the Social History Interview Form to guide the interview and ensure that all the proper information is gathered. The youth should be interviewed **separately** from the parent/guardian to gather at least some of this information (particularly in regards to the home life and past aggressive behavior).

In general, the Youth Services/County Counselor should review the youth’s record and other documents prior to interviewing the youth, and the sources of information should be documented. Examples of useful sources of collateral data include information from professionals, prior reports (school records, employment, legal history, youth welfare records, mental health), and other records with information pertinent to the SAVRY assessment. **Every effort should be made to complete the SAVRY with more information than the youth’s interview only. Some collateral information should be obtained.** A thorough review of all available information, verification of

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	5 of 8

self-reported information (including that pertaining to residence, school and/or training, and employment) and frequent reference to the scoring instructions will help ensure rating accuracy. It also is helpful to consider the evidence both “for” and “against” each item before assigning a rating.

In circumstances where a Youth Services/County Counselor is not able to obtain all of the information to accurately rate the SAVRY during the initial assessment, it should be corrected within 30 to 60 days after the assessment as new information accumulates. The lead counselor must approve any corrections. It is important to correct the original SAVRY ratings if these were incorrect, rather than to wait for the first re-assessment to correct this information.

Use of Information

Social History: Results of the SAVRY must be included in the Social History Report, if ordered, or in oral dispositional recommendations in the absence of a written report. This should include the Youth Services/County Counselor’s judgment as to whether the youth is at relatively low, moderate, or high risk for serious or violent re-offending. Reports also should include a summary of the youth’s primary criminogenic need factors that contribute to his or her risk for re-offending. These are the factors that should be addressed in disposition and service planning. The social history interview template can be followed as a guide.

What should NOT be included in Social History Reports or any other communications to the court include any specific SAVRY item ratings or over-emphasis on historical risk factors. Social histories completed pre-adjudication are NOT to be shared with the court and/or attorneys until AFTER the adjudication hearing.

Case Supervision Plan: The Case Supervision Plan is to be completed after the disposition of each case and updated as the status of the case changes. (See attachment B). The Case Supervision Plan should be reviewed every 90 days. Results of the SAVRY also must be utilized to develop the Case Supervision Plan. This involves consideration of risk/need factors where the youth was rated low, moderate or high. The service matrix should be used to identify proper services based on these risk/need factors. Generally, the Youth Services/County Counselor shall refer a youth to a **maximum of three** services at any single time to address up to three of the need areas that represent the most problematic SAVRY domains on the youth’s supervision plan (this is not a minimum; if there are not 3 services from which the youth will benefit, no services or fewer services should be assigned). The youth’s level of risk and need in those areas should be considered in the assignment of services. Higher need and higher risk youths should receive more intensive services whenever possible. Lower risk youths often do not require services.

Reassessments: If a reassessment indicates needs have changed (e.g., some initially high risk needs have improved or new need areas have appeared), the probation case supervision plan should be adjusted accordingly (e.g., once a particular service is completed and that need has been addressed, a referral to new service to address a different need area could be made)

Supervision per Risk Level

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	6 of 8

The minimum number of face-to-face contacts required for the three risk levels as assessed by the SAVRY is as follows (to be consistent with the Case Contact Standards Policy #41):

- Low: one face-to-face contact every 60 days, one contact with parent/guardian every other month, collateral contacts with school and relevant service providers
- Medium: one face-to-face contact every 30 days, one contact with parent/guardian per month, one collateral contact with school and relevant service providers
- High: one face-to-face contact every two weeks or one per month if there is documentation that the youth is in intensive services, one contact with a parent/guardian per month, and collateral contacts with the school (which in session) and other relevant service providers

Minimum requirements do not relieve the Youth Services/County Counselor from the responsibility of responding to the youth's needs as they arise.

The minimum requirement of a low supervision level for low risk youth should not be superseded unless there is very good reason. More is not better.

Supervision levels will be adjusted either up or down based on the progress of the case and a SAVRY reassessment following the lead counselor's approval.

Quality Assurance: Lead Counselor/Regional Director

A comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) process will be implemented to assure the proper use of the SAVRY tool. This process will ensure the accountability of the established policy and procedure.

Lead Counselors/Regional Director should complete the same training on the SAVRY with the staff in order to supervise the quality of their staff's assessments.

Staff members are responsible for notifying the Lead Counselor/Regional Director of all completed SAVRY forms. Lead Counselors/Regional Director should check that the SAVRY was completed for all required cases as per the region policy.

Lead Counselors/Regional Director will review the forms and ensure the assessment meets a sufficient level of quality before signing off on the assessment. This review will include ensuring that staff made efforts to obtain appropriate collateral data and considered all available information when rating the SAVRY. At a minimum, this should include all existing file information and an interview with the youth. Should staff decide to assign a risk rating that deviates substantially from what might be expected based on what is indicated by the item ratings, the lead counselor/Regional Director should ensure the staff member's written justification for the deviation is appropriate.

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	7 of 8

Lead Counselors/Regional Director must approve any major changes to SAVRY assessments.

Lead Counselors/Regional Director should also sign the proposed case supervision plan by ensuring the service referrals are reasonable given the results of the assessment.

The following guidelines should be followed when implementing SAVRY QA:

- A. SAVRY Tracking Form – Each Youth Services/County Counselor shall complete and submit a SAVRY Tracking Form to the regional director by the 3rd of each month (see attachment C).
- B. SAVRY Case Audit Form will be utilized by the regional directors during the monthly site visits to ensure SAVRY compliance (see attachment D). Each Regional Director is responsible to audit at least two cases per month.
- C. Client Survey Form – The Regional Director will mail monthly by random selection the client survey form to the youth who successfully completed supervision (see attachment E).

All pertinent information gathered from the Youth Services/County Counselor by the Regional Director will ensure accuracy and accountability. This information may be used to assist in rating individual employee performance.

Quality Assurance: Data Checks

Staff will be properly identified and assigned within the region to conduct quality assurance and data tracking. The duties will include:

- Checking the data periodically (e.g., every 6 months) to ensure that the correct classes of youth are being assessed with the SAVRY (e.g., all youth for whom a Social History Report is required, and all youth placed on probation when no Social History Report is completed).
- Checking the data periodically (e.g., every 6 months) by obtaining a print out of assessment ratings by Youth Services/County Counselor and other staff persons. Query any Youth Services/County Counselors who are routinely assigning a single risk category (e.g., all of their youth are rated as “low risk”, all youth are rated as “moderate risk”, or all youth are rated as “high risk”).
- Periodically checking a sample of youth or generate an aggregate data print out to see whether youth are receiving the appropriate level of supervision given their overall risk rating.
- Periodically checking the ratings for a sample of youth to see if they actually received the appropriate service referrals from staff according to the facility’s/agency’s service matrix.

Feedback Loop

SUBJECT	POLICY	PAGE
SAVRY	41	8 of 8

Establishment of a feedback mechanism between the Master Trainers/Lead Counselors, Regional Director and quality assurance personnel is essential. The Supervisors should be notified about any staff members who require individual feedback for a number of "incorrect" ratings in order to adjust their monitoring of those staff accordingly. Likewise, the Lead Counselors and Regional Directors must see the QA reports.