

## STANDARDS GOVERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL STUDY

- I. **The primary purpose of the social study is to provide the Court with timely, relevant, and accurate data so that it may select the most appropriate dispositional alternative.**

*The social study will be made available to the judge in ample time for him to become familiar with its contents before the dispositional hearing.*

- II. **The social study report shall never be used to substantiate the facts alleged in a petition.**
- III. **A social study report shall be required in every case where a juvenile has been adjudicated delinquent. Adequate precautions must be taken to assure that information from the social study report will not be disclosed to the Court prior to adjudication.**

*The social study report may contain information that is relevant to the judge's disposition decision, but irrelevant to the adjudicatory decision. Such information may prove prejudicial to the child.*

- IV. **The probation department shall assign the resources required to ensure the timely completion of social study reports.**

*Sufficient staff, time, space and equipment should be assigned to all social study functions. The resources assigned to the social study functions should not adversely affect the delivery of other probation services. Generally, the preparation of a social study report should not exceed three weeks involving in-state cases, five weeks for cases requiring out-of-state investigation, and ten judicial days for children in detention.*

- V. **Staff other than probation officers may be used to collect information in preparation of the social study report.**

*The use of nonprofessional staff (i.e., paraprofessionals, volunteers, students, clerical staff) to collect needed data allows probation officers to use their skills in interpreting data and developing plans.*

- VI. **The Chief Juvenile Probation Officer or agency director shall supervise and review, on a continuing basis, the procedures for conducting social study investigations, the preparation of reports, and the provision of disposition alternatives for the Court.**

- VII. **The social study shall have a definite format for the organization of material.**

*A good format will provide for the assembling of information under certain headings. The use of standard headings and heading sequences will help the judge to quickly locate particular details of the case which become pertinent as disposition progresses. For example, there might be separate headings to summarize information on Offense, Behavior Pattern, Family Background, etc.*

*The social study should include such information as the significance of the offense or offenses which brought the child to the attention of the juvenile court; the child's behavior pattern at home, school, and in the community; the*

*development of the child physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially with emphasis upon increasing understanding of the child's present behavior and possible future difficulties; the attitudes of the family, school and community as they may affect the child's chances for readjustment; psychological, psychiatric and medical evaluation where this kind of help is indicated; employers and opportunity for employment; an evaluation by the probation officer based on information developed in the factual portion of the social study report; and a recommendation for disposition which provides balanced attention to protection of the community, imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable the child to become a responsible and productive member of the community.*

**VIII. A potential supervision plan with any special conditions shall be developed during the social study investigation and included as part of the social study report.**

**IX. The language of the social study shall be clear and concise.**

**X. Where the adjudication and disposition hearings occur on different dates, the social study report shall be submitted to the Court and the defendant's counsel for review and evaluation a minimum of two working days in advance of the date set for disposition.**

*A minimum of two full days is seen as essential for the Court's review, but this generalized time frame must be adjusted to judicial schedules and workloads.*

**XI. The Juvenile Court Judge and the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer shall develop written policy and procedures to protect the confidentiality of the social study and other reports.**

*Information about cases should not be discussed openly, and files and records should not be left unattended. Sharing of case information should be in accordance with applicable statutes.*

**XII. The social study report shall be forwarded in a timely fashion by the probation department to persons, agencies and/or institutions where supervision, treatment or rehabilitation of an adjudicated youth is ordered.**

*Social study materials should be sent at or before the time of the youth's arrival at a residential program or initial visit with a local agency.*