

Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program

Believe in Youth's Potential



The Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP) helps keep children out of the court system. It provides youth and their families with supports and services that help address the behaviors that led to their court involvement. It's a chance for youth to take accountability for their actions — with a lot of support and *without* giving them a juvenile court record.

Why Participate in Diversion?

Diversion helps keep youth out of the court system. **Youth who successfully complete MYDP do not have a juvenile record.** Participation is voluntary and not considered an admission of guilt.

When youth participate in diversion, they work with a diversion coordinator and are connected to supports in their community **at no cost**. Every child gets their own unique diversion plan, tailored to them and their needs. Most cases are closed successfully within 90 days.



MYDP Process

A child may be referred to the program by a police officer, a court clerk, a district attorney, or a judge if they have been accused of a crime.

1. Creating the Plan: After a referral is made, a diversion coordinator contacts the youth and their caregiver to explain the diversion program and get permission to participate. If a youth and their caregiver do not agree to participate or decide to withdraw from the program, the child's case continues within the formal court system.

If a youth and their caregiver agree to participate, the diversion coordinator works with them to develop a personalized diversion agreement. A diversion agreement describes the diversion requirements, or what a youth needs to do to complete the diversion program. Youth typically have two to three diversion requirements tailored to their interests and abilities.

Who are Diversion Coordinators?

Diversion coordinators are here to help youth succeed! Diversion coordinators work with youth, their families, service providers, and diversion referrers, with the goal of connecting youth to services that meet their needs. They also provide mentorship and support to help youth overcome barriers.



2. Taking Action: The diversion coordinator connects the youth to the services and supports in their diversion agreement. The youth meets with the diversion coordinator regularly for guidance, to talk about the services they are receiving, and to work through any challenges.

3. Closing the Case: Once a youth makes meaningful progress on or completes their diversion requirements, the diversion case can close. When a case closes, the diversion coordinator, youth, and their families reflect on the child's achievements and discuss any remaining questions.

Setting Youth Up to Succeed

A recent study found that **87% of MYDP participants finished the program successfully.** A case is closed successfully when the participating youth shows consistent progress on or completes the diversion requirements *and* avoids other illegal activities. **Once a case is successfully closed, there is no further court involvement and no juvenile record.**



Youth in the MYDP are Set up for Success

The MYDP offers a variety of services to help youth be safe, healthy, and successful. MYDP recognizes the important role that families, trusted adults, and the community play in accomplishing that goal. That's why the MYDP is committed to diversion services **offered by your community, within your community**. Services are offered in multiple languages to engage all families.

The MYDP is run by a network of local community organizations. Youth are connected to services that meet their identified needs and help them reach their full potential.



While each diversion plan is unique, below are some examples of diversion goals and requirements.

DIVERSION GOAL	EXAMPLE DIVERSION REQUIREMENTS
Accountability	Draft an apology letter, write an essay about what was learned from the experience
Behavioral health screening/treatment	Participate in therapy, work with a therapeutic mentor
Community participation	Participate in restorative justice programming, participate in community programming
Educational support/programs	Obtain IEP testing, complete requirements for graduation, apply to/participate in an academic mentoring program, work with an academic tutoring service
Vocational training/Employment	Build a resume, apply to a summer job
Recreational and prosocial activities	Participate in school sports, engage in a mentor program
Substance use	Engage in substance use treatment
Family programming	Engage in family counseling

Youth Success Stories

Succeeding in School: The diversion coordinator worked with the youth, their family and special education staff to ensure an individualized education plan (IEP) was put in place. The child received the additional academic and social supports they needed to succeed. They experienced major improvements in both their academics and their peer relationships.

Making Positive Life Choices: Throughout their time enrolled in the MYDP, the youth used skills they were building in therapy – one of their diversion requirements – to make positive change in their life. They enrolled in a GED program and improved their relationship with their family.

Improving Decision Making: A child referred for vandalism cleaned the recreation center where the vandalism occurred. While they were cleaning their community, the diversion coordinator worked with the child on skills to resist peer pressure and improve decision making. Since completing the program, the child has become consistently involved in school activities and joined their school's football team.



Youth Participants Report Positive MYDP Experiences

Youth participants were asked to complete a post program survey:

- 93% of youth reported feeling supported by the diversion coordinator
- 83% of youth felt they could stay out of trouble after completing the program
- 81% of youth noted that the program helped them reflect on any harm they may have caused

“The youth diversion program is a program to help you not only not have a record it gives you a chance to be better, it opens up your mind and helps you think differently to avoid mistakes in the future”

• MYDP Participant



“[The diversion program helps] to get me on the right path and reflect on my actions.”

• MYDP Participant

“Diversion is an opportunity to showcase who you really are and not let the mistakes define you.”

• MYDP Participant



For more information about the MYDP, contact:

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