**[ENTER COUNTY NAME] Juvenile Probation Department Graduated Response Policy**

This document serves as a customizable template for individual department’s Graduated Response Policy.

**Mission Statement:**

A graduated response system uses incentives and interventions, delivered in a structured, systematic manner, to encourage, discourage, and shape progress toward specified behaviors of youth under juvenile probation department supervision and at all stages of the juvenile court process.

A graduated response system provides empirically based strategies for responding effectively to behaviors. Within this framework, incremental, proportionate, and predictable responses are delivered so that youths’ positive, compliant behaviors are encouraged and reinforced, and their negative, noncompliant behaviors are effectively addressed with interventions that meet youth needs and hold youth accountable.

**Goals of a Graduated Response System:**

A graduated response system in juvenile probation encourages positive behavior change to help youth successfully complete probation and become responsible and productive members of the community, while also limiting the use of detention and residential placement to public safety situations for which all community-based interventions have been explored and determined insufficient to reduce risk to public safety. The goals of a graduated response system include:

* Using a developmentally informed approach to working with youth
* Fostering behavior change and encouraging prosocial behavior of youth by using incentives and interventions that effectively address the underlying causes driving noncompliant behavior(s)
* Promoting youths’ accountability by responding to noncompliant behavior with swiftness, certainty, and consistency
* Structuring decision-making processes across juvenile probation officers to promote more consistent, predictable, and equitable decision making
* Decreasing youths’ recidivism
* Reducing financial costs associated with responding to non-safety issues with detention and/or residential placement

**Key Definitions:**

**Responses:**Actions used to respond to desired behaviors and/or noncompliant behaviors

* **Incentives:**Responses that are used to encourage new positive behaviors or the continuation or increased frequency of existing positive behaviors, such as verbal praise, curfew extension, removal of an intervention, or giving a tangible incentive
* **Interventions:**Responses to noncompliant behaviors administered to hold the youth accountable and prevent or reduce the frequency or intensity of those behaviors in the future, such as verbal feedback, earlier curfew, community service hours, or cognitive behavioral interventions. Interventions can mean any type of response that seeks to meaningfully alter a behavior by addressing the reasons for that behavior. Counties currently use different terminology for these types of responses (e.g., interventions, consequences, and sanctions).

**Noncompliant behaviors:**Behaviors that do not conform to expectations, rules, or laws, such as not complying with court-ordered conditions

**Guiding Principles:**

Research indicates that responses are more effective in shaping behavior if they are:

* **Certain**: Responses should always occur when an identified behavior occurs
* **Swift**: Responses should occur as close in time as possible to the identified behavior
* **Targeted**: Responses should be targeted to an identified behavior and be clearly communicated and understood by the youth and their family
* **Proportionate**: Responses should match the identified behavior in terms of intensity/content
* **Fair**: Responses should be fairly applied across all youth on probation

The graduated response approach in juvenile probation:

* Maximizes use of incentives and interventions that are **certain, swift, targeted,** **proportionate,** and **fair**
* Ensures responses are **individualized** to be meaningful to youth
* Sets **clear expectations** and develops and delivers **incremental, meaningful** and **predictable** responses so that youths’ positive behaviors are encouraged and reinforced, and their negative, noncompliant behaviors are effectively addressed with interventions that target the reasons for the behavior, meet youths’ needs, and hold youth accountable.
* **Uses incentives** to provide reinforcement and encourage positive short- and long-term behaviors.
* **Uses strategic interventions** to address reasons for noncompliance and obstacles to goal attainment so youth can succeed in the future.
* **Integrates** graduated responses into a **case plan** that aims to address SMART goals that were developed jointly between juvenile probation officers and youth.
* Uses the **4 to 1 ratio**: To maximize long-term behavior change, research supports using at least four times as many incentives as interventions.
* Incorporates **instrumental learning** and **operant conditioning**: Underlying graduated responses is an understanding that the adolescent brain differs from that of mature adults. Adolescents are wired to prioritize the potential for short-term rewards for their behavior over the threat of long-term outcomes.
* Shall be used with all youth receiving services from the juvenile court and/or the juvenile probation department.

**Procedures**

*<<Graduated Response procedures will vary across counties based upon the availability of resources and stakeholder priorities. Your county’s Graduated Response system may include the following procedural components.>>*

**Risk/Needs Scores**  
The juvenile probation department or juvenile probation officer should use a youth’s most recent YLS score as one of several factors in determining the appropriate intervention response to a particular behavior. Responses should be individualized based upon the youth’s behavior, reason(s) for the behavior, current level of risk, criminogenic needs, and responsivity factors.  
 **Case plans**  
The juvenile probation department or juvenile probation officer should integrate the identification and application of incentives and interventions into individual youths’ case plans. The case plan, which includes SMART goals and action steps, should emphasize progress and improvement toward short- and long-term goals, with well-defined opportunities for youth to earn individualized incentives and for juvenile probation officers to problem-solve and intervene when needed to help youth succeed.

**Response administration**  
If a juvenile probation officer *witnesses* a youth engage in a specified behavior, a response should be immediately administered. Otherwise, once a juvenile probation officer *is made aware* that a youth has demonstrated a specified behavior, a response is introduced as soon as possible. To effectively shape behavior, the ratio of incentives to interventions should significantly favor incentives (4 incentives for every intervention).

<<*Indicate which incentives or interventions require supervisory approval or a court order*>>

*Using Incentives*  
When responding to compliant behavior:

* Acknowledge positive behavior early and often.
* Accompany each incentive with specific praise that recognizes a youth’s effort, progress, and accomplishments.
* Use the department’s Incentives List, in conjunction with youth input, to identify appropriate and motivating incentives. Elicit youth input on which incentives are most important to them and, therefore, will increase their likelihood of engaging in desired behaviors. Incentives should align with an individual youth’s circumstances, interests, cognitive ability, and maturity, with the understanding that these may change over time.
* Identify who should administer an incentive to each youth. Identify the individual(s) in the youth’s life who will have the greatest impact or from whom incentives will be most meaningful. In addition to the juvenile probation officer, this might include a parent/caregiver, teacher, coach, or judge.
* Provide an explanation of the purpose of the incentive to the youth and family. Ensure that youth and families understand the behavior in question, the response, and the expected behaviors going forward.

*Using Interventions*  
When classifying and responding to noncompliant behavior:

* Gather sufficient information related to the alleged noncompliant behavior. This may require the juvenile probation officer to speak with the youth and/or their parent/caregiver and, if necessary, other agencies (e.g., school) and/or individuals (e.g., outpatient provider, police).
* Understand underlying reasons for the noncompliant behavior and provide interventions that effectively address those underlying reasons with the goal of changing the behavior in the future.
* Determine the youth’s current risk of re-offense. This may require updating the youth’s YLS.
* Consider the youth’s responsivity factors and strengths when selecting an intervention from the county’s Response Matrix. The response should be the least restrictive option needed to address the youth’s behavior.
* Determine the severity of the noncompliant behavior using the county’s Response Matrix. If multiple incidents of noncompliance resulted from one event, consider the most serious form of noncompliance when identifying the most appropriate intervention.
* Utilize the most appropriate response, even if it has already been used. The same response (incentive or intervention) can be used multiple times. A youth may repeat a noncompliant behavior, and with normal adolescent development, youth can learn to refrain from engaging in such behavior if proportional responses are used consistently and repeatedly.
* Provide an explanation of the need and purpose of the intervention to the youth and family. Ensure that youth and families understand the behavior in question, the response, and the expected behaviors going forward.
* Determine for which interventions (e.g., electronic monitoring, attendance at evening reporting center, extension of probation) supervisory approval or a court order is needed.

**Documentation**

Timely documentation of the use of graduated responses with youth is crucial to case management tracking, evaluating effectiveness of graduated responses on a youth’s behavior, and monitoring staff fidelity to Graduated Response policies and practices.

Juvenile probation officers will be expected to use the *Graduated Response Module* and the juvenile calendar/case notes in the Pennsylvania Juvenile Case Management System (PaJCMS) to document and track the use of graduated responses. All juvenile probation officers should review and receive training on the PaJCMS Graduated Response User’s Guide.

*<<Each county will describe and explain specifically how documentation will occur>>*

Juvenile probation officers should document:

* When making contact with a youth to administer an incentive and/or intervention and the reason for that response
* When making contact with a parent/caregiver/family member/supportive adult to administer a response to a youth for demonstration of a compliant and/or noncompliant behavior
* When making contact with a youth to acknowledge their *progress* towards goals on their case plan
* When a youth has *completed* specific goals identified on their case plan.

**Continuous Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance**

**Training staff in Graduated Response policy and practices**  
All juvenile probation officers who are responsible for administering graduated responses should be trained on the guiding principles of graduated responses and their department’s Graduated Response system policies and practices. Thorough understanding of the philosophical and practical underpinnings of any department’s Graduated Response system facilitates juvenile probation officers’ clear communication of graduated responses with youth and families; it also promotes consistent and equitable application of graduated responses by all juvenile probation officers across all youth and families.

*<<Each county will describe who will be responsible for training>>*

* A Graduated Response Coordinator will be designated for Gradated Response training and CQI.

**Tools**

* Response Matrix
* Incentives List
* Guiding Principles
* <<Forthcoming Online Graduated Response Introduction & Training>>