

## Procedural Guide

0600-500.05

### MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT TEAM (MAT)

Date Issued: **06/24/08**

New Policy Release

Revision of Existing Procedural Guide dated

**Revision Made:** **NOTE:** Current Revisions are Highlighted

Cancels:

#### DEPARTMENTAL VALUES

This policy supports the Department's efforts to improve the safety of children, reduce reliance in out-of-home care, and improve timeliness to permanency. The value of children and families having a multidisciplinary assessment is that it provides a comprehensive understanding of the complicated issues that families face when they first enter the foster care system. DCFS social workers can utilize the assessment to effectively plan with the family and practitioners to address specific needs, treatment, and services early on. Early and effective planning will increase the level of safety and increase the degree of service linkage when children are in out-of-home care, reduce the time to achieve permanency, and decrease the likelihood that the family will return to the child welfare system.

#### WHAT CASES ARE AFFECTED

This Procedural Guide is applicable to all newly detained children that are Medi-Cal eligible, placed in out-of-home care, and detained by an office **that has implemented MAT**.

#### OPERATIONAL IMPACT

The Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) is a collaboration between DCFS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). It is designed to ensure the immediate and comprehensive assessment of children and youth entering out-of-home placement. The goals of this program include:

- More timely, comprehensive and strength-based assessment of detained children and their families
- Early diagnostic awareness of critical medical conditions leading to early intervention and consistent management of such conditions
- Increased cooperation between families, caregivers, providers of services and DCFS
- More appropriate team placement decisions for children
- Greater consideration given to sibling, relative, and community placements
- Earlier access to medical, dental and mental health services for children in out-of-home care and their respective families
- Increased safety for children during out-of-home care

The MAT assessment is intended to identify some special needs a child(ren) may have and identify parental issues that place the family in danger of a lengthy separation. The information gathered for the MAT assessment will be used to determine what services are most needed by the child(ren) with the intention of using the information for the most appropriate placement of the child while ensuring that the child's needs are met.

### **MAT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The ER CSW is responsible for identifying and referring a MAT eligible child when the child is detained. In order to be eligible for MAT, **all of the following criteria must be met:**

**NOTE:** Designated offices that have implemented MAT are referring 2-Pen cases.

- **The child was detained by an office that has implemented MAT;**
- **The child must be Straight Medi-cal eligible;**
- **It must be a detention on a new referral-**It cannot be a detention on an already open case, this includes failed VFM's and Court FM cases; and
- **The child must be placed in out-of-home care (relative or foster care)-** Children placed with non-offending parent do not qualify.

**NOTE:** If the Court orders a MAT assessment on a case that is not MAT eligible, discuss this with the MAT coordinator and a decision will be made to proceed or not with the MAT assessment based on the case needs and provider capacity.

## **MAT REFERRAL**

After eligibility is determined, the DCFS MAT Coordinator must put together a complete referral package, which includes the following documents:

- The Minute Order with the MAT authorization language.
- DCFS 180A, The Authorization to Release and Exchange Information signed by the parent or legal guardian
- The Two-Page MAT Referral Form
- A copy of the Medi-Cal letter from the placement package, and
- A copy of the Detention report.

Once this referral package is completed, the MAT Coordinator contacts a provider from the MAT Provider list that best matches the needs of the family based on language, location and specialties.

## **MAT PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ROLES**

### **MAT Coordinator**

The DCFS MAT Coordinators will have a dual role. Their primary role is to ensure all detained children receive a MAT assessment and are linked to mental health treatment as needed. Their secondary role will be to assist each Regional Office with the development and coordination of their DMH and DCFS resources into Coordinated Screening and Assessment Team (CSAT). The MAT Coordinator acts as a point of contact for DMH and the DMH providers, and has the following responsibilities.

- Accepts referrals for the MAT program.
- Attends Team-Decision-Making Meetings, if available.
- Completes MAT Referral Form.
- Obtains Detention Hearing minute order, facilitates court authorization language if omitted.
- Consults with DMH regarding provider capacity.
- Selects the appropriate DMH MAT Provider based on child and family needs.
- Requests provider to run MIS screen.
- Once the referral has been accepted by the provider, faxes the complete MAT referral package to the MAT Provider Agency.
- Ensures the assignment of a PHN to each case for medical assessment follow through.
- Responds to questions and problem solves as needed with DCFS, DMH, and DMH MAT Providers.
- Attends and co-facilitates MAT Meetings.

## **ER CSW**

- Alerts the MAT Coordinator when a detention takes place.
- Explains to the family the MAT process and obtains parent authorization.
- Includes recommendation for MAT court order in the Detention Report.
- Provides requested information to MAT Coordinator.
- Attends MAT Meetings, as available.

## **ER SCSW**

- Ensures MAT Coordinator is informed regarding any detention.
- Ensures that the family is informed about the MAT process and efforts have been made to obtain authorization.
- Ensures that the appropriate language recommending the MAT order is documented in the Detention Report.
- Ensures that any information requested by the MAT Coordinator is provided.
- Informs the foster parent about the MAT process.

## **ISW**

- Inform MAT Coordinator of all placement changes of identified MAT children.
- Verifies that the family is informed about the MAT process and finalizes efforts to obtain MAT authorization and releases.
- Forward all authorizations and releases to MAT Coordinator.
- Verifies that the appropriate language recommending the MAT order is documented on the Minute Order.
- Provide MAT Coordinator with all requested information.
- Attends and participates in the Summary of Findings MAT Meetings, as available.
- Maintains frequent and continuing communication with the DI CSW, MAT Coordinator, and DMH MAT Provider.
- Verifies that the foster parent is informed about the MAT process.

## **ISW-SCSW**

- Ensure that ISW informs MAT Coordinator of all placement changes of identified MAT children.
- Ensure that the ISW verifies that the family is informed about the MAT process and finalizes efforts to obtain MAT authorization and releases.
- Ensure that MAT Coordinator receives all MAT consents and releases.
- Ensure that Minute Order has required appropriate language recommending the MAT order.
- Ensure that ISW provides MAT Coordinator with all requested information.
- Attends and participates in the Summary of Findings MAT Meetings, in the absence of the ISW, as available.

- Ensures that ISW maintains frequent and continuing communication with the DI CSW, MAT Coordinator, and DMH MAT Provider as necessary.

### **Dependency Investigator (DI)**

- Maintains frequent and continuing communication with the case-carrying CSW, MAT Coordinator, and DMH MAT Provider.
- Attends and participates in the Summary of Findings MAT Meetings, as available.
- Provides court status on the MAT assessment process and attaches the final MAT Summary of Findings report to the Jurisdiction/Disposition report, and/or supplemental report, and/or ex-parte report.

### **DI SCSW**

- Participates in MAT Meeting in DI's absence.
- Ensures status of the MAT assessment process is appropriately addressed in the court report.

### **Case-Carrying CSW**

- Maintains frequent and continuing communication with DI, MAT Coordinator and DMH MAT Provider.
- Provides DMH MAT Provider any necessary case information when requested.
- Inform MAT Coordinator of all placement changes of identified MAT children.
- Attends and participates in the Summary of Findings MAT Meetings.
- If the case is post-disposition and the MAT results were not available prior to disposition, provides court status on the MAT assessment process and attaches the final MAT Summary of Findings report to a supplemental report or walk it on to court.

### **SCSW of CSW**

- Ensures that CSW is communicating with assigned DI.
- Ensures that CSW provides necessary case information to provider when requested.
- Participates in MAT Meeting in CSWs absence.
- Ensures status of MAT assessment process is reflected in the court report.

### **PHN**

- Assists in linking MAT family to a board certified pediatrician or HUB.
- Assists in arranging for dental exam.
- Assists to ensure that the initial Medical Screening is completed timely.
- Reviews Medical findings with all necessary parties (DMH Provider, CSW, DI).
- Participates in MAT Meeting, as needed.
- Arranges for any necessary medical follow-up.

- Documents medical findings in CWS/CMS.

### **DMH MAT Staff**

- Consults with the MAT Coordinator on provider selection for each child requiring a MAT, as needed.
- Intervenes on behalf of DCFS when problematic issues arise with DMH MAT providers.
- Assists with the interpretation of assessment information.
- Advises DCFS CSW / ISW / DI on applicable intervention strategies and necessary level of care.
- Assists case-carrying CSW with the linkage of children and families to needed services.
- Participates in MAT meeting.
- Participates in program evaluation and further planning.

### **DMH Contracted Provider**

- Reviews information provided by DCFS and determines case acceptance in a timely manner.
- Makes appropriate collateral contacts.
- Provides assessments in the following areas: health, dental, mental health, education, development, family strengths, and placement.
- Completes DMH required forms.
- Provides DCFS MAT Coordinator with Summary of Findings Draft at least 24 hours in advance of Summary of Findings meeting.
- Convenes and co-facilitates MAT Meeting to finalize the Summary of Findings Report.
- Prepares final Summary of Findings Report.
- Assists in providing linkages to mental health services as needed.

## **MAT ASSESSMENT**

Designated DMH Providers have been identified to complete the MAT assessment within 30 – 45 days of receipt of a complete referral packet. The MAT assessment process will occur independently of the DCFS detention process. The MAT assessment addresses the following areas of need:

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • medical         | • education         |
| • dental          | • vocation          |
| • developmental   | • mental health and |
| • speech/language | • family/caregiver. |

The DMH MAT Provider is required to conduct the standard DMH Child and Adolescent Assessment and complete the MAT Summary of Findings Report. This is achieved by performing the following activities:

- Interview child (to assess functioning, history, strengths and needs);
- Interview parent (to assess parenting skills, family dynamics, family strengths, family needs, parents' perception of the quality of the attachment between child and family and the parents' mental health status);
- Observe parent –child interactions to assess the quality of the attachment between child and family;
- Current caretaker interview (to assess permanency, parenting skills, family dynamics, family strengths, quality of attachment to child and home environment);
- Interview of other potential caregiver(s) as identified by DCFS;
- Gathering of medical and dental information. When available, the DCFS Regional PHN or designated staff will collect and provide this information, including information from the medical HUB;
- Consultation with past or current service providers;
- Collection of data (health records, Hub Medical Exam 561(a) (when available), educational and vocational records, psychosocial/mental health treatment records, prior psychological assessments, developmental and family history, DCFS placement history and Regional Center and juvenile justice records, if applicable; and
- Diagnostic testing if indicated.

The information gathered by the assessment is used to determine what services are most needed by the child and what is the most appropriate placement thereby reducing the amount of time the child is separated from his/her family. The assessment process culminates in the MAT Summary of Findings Report and is incorporated into the child's Case Plan presented to the court.

### **MAT MEETING**

Once all of the MAT information is gathered by the DMH MAT Provider, the DCFS MAT Coordinator and DMH MAT Provider will coordinate a MAT meeting to accomplish the following:

- Agreement on the Summary of Findings Report.
- Develop a treatment plan, including mental health treatment options for the child, parent(s) and caregiver.
- Identification and linkage of client/family to necessary and viable community resources.

- Consideration of reunification, permanency and visitation goals.
- Evaluation of the appropriateness of placement with the current caregiver and potential caregivers.

The MAT meeting will be facilitated by the DCFS MAT Coordinator or the DMH MAT Provider. The length of the MAT meeting will be from 1-2 hours, depending on the number of children in the family. The MAT meeting may include any of the following core team members:

- The family
- The child, if appropriate
- The case-carrying CSW or ISW
- SCSW of case-carrying CSW/ISW, if the CSW/ISW is not available
- The Dependency Investigator (DI)
- The Public Health Nurse (PHN)
- The foster parent, if appropriate, or relative caregiver

Optional team members can be identified by the CSW, the Provider and family, relatives and family support persons. Optional members may include other service providers such as the FFA social worker, community service providers, mental health service providers, DMH/DCFS Regional MAT Coordinators, the DHS provider, the education representative, Regional Center representative, the Adoption CSW, Probation Liaison or other appropriate providers.

All core team members attending the MAT meeting will sign the Confidentiality Declaration and the MAT Summary of Findings Signature Page.

Twenty-four business hours prior to the MAT meeting, the DMH MAT Provider will provide the DCFS MAT Coordinator with a copy of the draft Summary of Findings Report for review by the team members. Based on the final agreements concluded in the MAT meeting, the DMH MAT Provider will revise the draft report and submit one copy of the final MAT Summary of Findings Report to the DCFS MAT Coordinator. The DMH MAT Provider will submit the final MAT Summary of Findings Report within 30 –45 days after acceptance of the complete referral packet.

### **CONSENSUS**

If the members of the MAT assessment team cannot reach a consensus in the MAT meeting, the following conflict resolution process will be employed:

The MAT Provider and CSW will present the conflict to the CSW's Supervisor for a proposed resolution. If no decision is reached at the supervisor level, the case will be referred to the respective ARA. If no decision is reached at the ARA level, the case will be referred to the Regional Administrator (RA). If no decision is reached at

the RA level, the case will be referred to the DCFS Medical Director, or his designee, for final resolution.

## **MAT RE-ASSESSMENT**

Any child who receives a MAT assessment will be considered for participation in the re-assessment process when the child has new mental health needs that are brought about by either new circumstances (i.e. placement change), new behaviors or new information that significantly changes the previous MAT Summary of Findings Report and places the child in danger of being removed from their current placement.

The MAT re-assessment will include, as necessary, the following:

- Review of the reason(s) for referral;
- Review of the current treatment plan for any necessary modifications;
- Review of the current and any prospective placements;
- Caretaker interview;
- Child interview;
- Biological parent interview to consider reunification;
- Service provider interviews;
- New diagnostic testing (when determined to be medically necessary);
- A re-evaluation of family strengths and community resources to determine how permanency can be provided for the child; and
- A re-evaluation of the service plan in order to make the necessary adjustments that will ensure appropriate service delivery and follow-through.

## **Procedures**

### **A. WHEN: A MAT ELIGIBLE CHILD IS DETAINED**

The ER CSW is responsible for identifying and referring a MAT eligible child when the child is detained. In order to be eligible for MAT, **all of the following criteria must be met:**

- **The child was detained by an office that has implemented MAT;**
- **The child must be Straight Medi-cal eligible;**

- **It must be a detention on a new referral**-It cannot be a detention on an already open case, this includes failed VFM's and Court FM cases;
- **The child must be placed in out-of-home care (relative or foster care)**- Children placed with non-offending parent do not qualify.

<p><b>NOTE:</b> The designation of ER CSW includes ERCP CSWs.</p>
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### ER CSW Responsibilities

1. Briefly explain the MAT process to the parent or guardian. (This can be done in the TDM for removal)
  - a) Provide the parent or guardian with a MAT brochure;
  - b) Ask if the family is engaged with any service providers such as medical, dental, developmental, hearing/language, education, mental health, etc. If so, explain that their input will be requested to help determine the needs of the child(ren) and family; and
  - c) Obtain signature from the parent by completing the DCFS 180A, Authorization to Release and Exchange Client Information and Records for Multidisciplinary Assessment Team Program.
2. When calling in the detention to IDC, inform IDC that that this is a MAT case, so it is reflected in the court petition and Court Report Addendum.
3. In the Detention Report, include the following language under Recommendations:
 

**“It is respectfully recommended that the court order a Multidisciplinary Assessment of the child and family, including an assessment of the child/children’s physical and psychological status. This information is to be provided to DCFS for inclusion in the Court Report.”**

**For 2-Pen cases, the following steps must be completed by the case-carrying CSW.**

4. As soon as possible, alert the MAT Coordinator when a detention takes place through e-mail or phone and provide the following documents to the MAT Coordinator: Document the contact in the Client Notebook.
  - a) Minute order stating that a MAT assessment is court ordered;
  - b) DCFS 180A, Authorization to Release and Exchange Client Information and Records for Multidisciplinary Assessment Team Program signed by the parent(s);

- c) Medi-Cal eligibility letter from the placement packet; and,
  - d) Up Front Assessment, if completed on the family.
5. Prior to completing the initial case plan, communicate with the DMH Provider to formulate the initial case plan that will most likely reflect the final MAT Summary of Findings report.

### **ER SCSW Responsibilities**

1. Confirm that the following was completed:
  - a) The MAT Coordinator was informed regarding the detention;
  - b) The family was informed about the MAT process and efforts have been made to obtain authorization; and
  - c) Any information requested by the MAT Coordinator was provided.

If the above is not completed, instruct the ER CSW to complete the above.

2. Review and approve the Detention Report to confirm that the language recommending the MAT order is included. If the language is not included, instruct the ER CSW to make the required changes.
3. If a Detention Log is kept and sent to IDC, identify the MAT cases in the log.
4. Review and approve the initial case plan, ensure that the ER CSW communicated with the DMH Provider to formulate a tentative case plan that will most likely reflect the final MAT Summary of Findings report.

### **IDC CSW Responsibilities**

1. Flag petition and Addendum Court Report as "MAT" when a MAT assessment is recommended in the Detention Report.

## **B. WHEN: THE COURT DID NOT ORDER A MAT ASSESSMENT ON A MAT ELIGIBLE CHILD**

### **DI Responsibilities**

1. Obtain authorization from the parent(s) or guardian by completing the DCFS 180A, Authorization to Release and Exchange Client Information and Records for Multidisciplinary Assessment Team Program.
2. If the parent(s) or guardian is not available to sign for authorization, call the County Counsel on the case to request authorization for a MAT assessment from the

court. If granted by the court, County Counsel will provide CSW with an Attorney's Order granting the Authorization for a MAT assessment.

### **C. WHEN: A CASE-CARRYING CSW RECEIVES A MAT IDENTIFIED CASE**

#### **ISW or Case-Carrying CSW Responsibilities**

1. Maintain frequent and continuing communication with the DI.
2. Provide the MAT DMH Provider and the DCFS Regional MAT Coordinator with any necessary case information when requested.
3. Participate in the MAT Meeting.
4. If the final MAT Summary of Findings report is completed post the Disposition Hearing and a DI is no longer assigned to the case, provide the court with an update on the MAT assessment, see Section E.

#### **SCSW Responsibilities**

1. Participates in the MAT Meeting in the CSWs absence.
2. Ensure that the CSW is communicating with the DI and MAT Coordinator.
3. Ensure that the CSW provides necessary case information to the DMH Provider when requested.

### **D. WHEN: A DI RECEIVES A MAT IDENTIFIED CASE**

**NOTE:** In Vertical Case Management Units, if an ISW is assigned to the case the ISW must complete the DI responsibilities. If an ISW is not assigned to the case, the case carrying CSW must complete the DI responsibilities.

#### **DI Responsibilities**

1. Maintain continuing communication with the following MAT Participants:
  - a) Case-carrying CSW;
  - b) DMH MAT Provider; and
  - c) MAT Coordinator
2. When possible, participate in the MAT Meeting facilitated by the MAT Coordinator or DMH MAT Provider.

3. Update the court as to the status of the MAT assessment in the Jurisdiction/Disposition Report.
  - a) When the MAT assessment is completed:
    - i. Incorporate the final Summary of Findings report into the court recommendations;
    - ii. If the initial case plan is significantly changed by the final MAT Summary of Findings Report, a case plan update is required. Attach the updated case plan to the court report.

**NOTE:** If the court does not approve the CSWs recommendation(s) and/or makes its own order(s) (i.e., not in response to a DCFS recommendation), a new Case Plan Update is required within seven calendar days of being notified and/or receipt of the minute order. See Procedural Guide 0080-504.20, Case Plan Update.

- iii. Attach the final Summary of Findings Report to the report.
  - b) When the MAT assessment is not complete, provide the court with the following information:
    - i. What provider is conducting the assessment;
    - ii. When the case was referred;
    - iii. Who the contact person is for the assessment;
    - iv. Respectfully remind the hearing officer that the assessment will take at least 30-45 days, after which time there will be a MAT Meeting;
    - v. Give as much detail as to where the family is in the process;
    - vi. Project a completion date; and
    - vii. Recommend a continuance date for disposition based on the projected completion date of the MAT assessment
    - viii. Formulate a tentative court orders and case plan based on your conversations with the DMH Provider.

### **DI SCSW Responsibilities**

1. Review and approve the Jurisdiction/Disposition report to ensure the following:
  - a) Status of the MAT assessment is appropriately addressed in the report.
  - b) If the final MAT Summary of Findings is complete, ensure that the recommendations in the final MAT Summary of Findings Report are incorporated into the court recommendations and case plan.
  - c) If the MAT assessment is pending, ensure that a continuance date for disposition is recommended.

d) The final MAT Summary of Findings is attached to the report.

If the above is not completed, instruct the DI to make the required changes.

2. If applicable, review and approve the case plan update, ensure that the recommendations in the final MAT Summary of Findings Report are incorporated into the case plan.
3. Participate in the MAT Meeting in the DI's absence.

## **E. WHEN: THE MAT ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED AFTER THE INITIAL JURISDICTION/ DISPOSITION COURT DATE**

### **Pre-Disposition DI Responsibilities**

1. If the Jurisdiction/Disposition hearing was continued to a later date for receipt of the MAT results, attach the final MAT Summary of Findings report and incorporate the report into the court recommendations and case plan for the family.
2. If the initial case plan is significantly changed by the final MAT Summary of Findings Report, a case plan update is required. Attach the updated case plan to the court report.

### **Post Disposition Case-Carrying CSW Responsibilities**

1. Walk on the final MAT Summary of Findings report using the MAT Court Cover, available on CWS/CMS under LA County specific templates. Indicate if DCFS is recommending modifications to existing court orders.
2. If the initial case plan is significantly changed by the final MAT Summary of Findings Report, a case plan update is required. Attach the updated case plan to the court report.

### **SCSW Responsibilities**

1. Review and approve the court report to confirm that the recommendations in the final MAT Summary of Findings Report are incorporated into the court recommendations. If not, instruct the CSW to make the required changes.
2. Review and approve the case plan update to ensure that the recommendations in the final MAT Summary of Findings Report are incorporated into the case plan. If not, instruct the CSW the make the required changes.

## F. WHEN: A MAT RE-ASSESSMENT IS NEEDED

Any child who completes a MAT assessment will be considered for participation in the re-assessment process if new circumstances (i.e. placement change), new behaviors or new information is identified that significantly changes the previous MAT Summary of Findings Report and places the child in danger of being removed from their current placement.

### Case-Carrying CSW Responsibilities

1. Consult with the MAT Coordinator regarding the need for a re-assessment. The MAT Coordinator will determine if a re-assessment is necessary.
2. If a MAT re-assessment is needed, provide the MAT Coordinator with all new information and documentation as needed to complete the MAT re-assessment.
3. Attend the MAT Meeting.

### APPROVAL LEVELS

Section	Level	Approval
A.	SCSW	Detention Report Initial Case Plan
B. & C.		None
D.	SCSW	Jurisdiction/Disposition Report If applicable, Case Plan Update
E.	SCSW	Supplemental Report and MAT Court Cover If applicable, Case Plan Update

### OVERVIEW OF STATUTES/REGULATIONS

None

### LINKS

California Code <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>  
Division 31 Regulations <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/ord/PG309.htm>  
Title 22 Regulations <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/ord/PG295.htm>

### RELATED POLICIES

**Procedural Guide 0080-502.10**, Initial Case Plan  
**Procedural Guide 0080-504.20**, Case Plan Update

**Procedural Guide 0500-501.30**, Disclosure of Health and Mental Health Information to and from County Departments Providing Services to a Child/Youth.

**FORM(S) REQUIRED/LOCATION**

**HARD COPY**            None

**LA Kids:**            MAT Brochure  
**DCFS 180A**, Authorization to Release and Exchange Client Information and Records for Multidisciplinary Assessment Team Program (English & Spanish)  
MAT Court Cover

**CWS/CMS:**            Detention Report  
Jurisdiction/Disposition Report  
Supplemental Report  
Client Notebook  
MAT Court Cover (LA County specific templates)

**SDM:**                None