# DRUG COURT RECOVERY MAINTENANCE CHECK-IN –RMC-i

# GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATION

***Background and Purpose of the Inventory***

This checklist was developed for use by drug courts and/or their treatment partners as a means of monitoring drug court participants during the most vulnerable period following their discharge from services in order to offer any needed support and services and to prevent relapse/re-offense. It is also to provide help in re-integrating graduates into needed services. It is well documented that drug dependence is a chronic, relapse-prone disease. The whole movement toward a chronic care model for the treatment of addiction, often referred to as Recovery Management is taking hold in the new healthcare environment. Drug courts should be aware of the need for extended services for participants beyond those that occur during the formal course of the individuals’ involvement in drug court. Research has shown that maintaining contact with graduates, particularly during the 90 days post discharge from drug court, can have a significant impact on the prevention of relapse, re-offense and the maintenance of recovery.

The Recovery Maintenance Check-in [RMC-i] is a tool that drug courts should feel free to use as

a key component of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care. The Check in may be altered or terms defined according to the culture and needs of each drug court. Nothing in the Check in tool is intended to be prescriptive or mandated. Drug courts are urged to experiment with the concept of recovery check- ins and to track their results.

Recovery management check-ins [periodic contacts] are an evidence-based practice. Drug courts can adopt this practice to meet the new NADCP Adult Drug Court standards.[[1]](#footnote-1) To facilitate these contacts, this Drug Court Recovery Maintenance Check-in [RMC-i] may be used. Drug courts should inform participants early on that check-ins will be conducted and there will be contact beyond the term of the formal drug court involvement. It may be easiest to include such notice in the drug court contract that inductees sign when they are initially admitted to drug court as well as to include it in the drug court participant’s manual.

***Structure of the Checklist***

The RMC-i was developed for use as a telephone contact in which interviewers call drug court graduates [including those who have not been successful for which contact information is available] at periodic intervals and administer the checklist. Recommended periodic intervals based on previous research are as follows: monthly for the first six months post discharge, bi-monthly for the next twelve months and quarterly for the next eighteen months for a total of thirty-six months.

The form provided may be used electronically and the information stored, or it may be done with paper, pencil. The RMC-i is designed for use by professionals and non-degreed professionals alike and is intended to reach populations where formal education may be limited. The

Questions are deliberately constructed to be open-ended and to elicit conversation and whatever information the respondent chooses to disclose. The primary purpose of the questions is to identify current problems and/or areas that the participant may need additional services for.

The domains of the checklist; **Housing, Family/Social Status, Health Status, Substance Use**, **Financial/Occupational Stability, Criminal Activity** have been targeted based upon the research that indicates that problems in these areas are likely to undermine recovery and trigger relapse/re-offense in recovering populations. These domains were also identified for inclusion in the National Outcome Measures [NOMS] by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment as essential to conducting outcome evaluation. By using the rating scales at the end of each domain in the text field provided, a drug court may incorporate the aggregated findings into its quality monitoring or program evaluation component. The rating scales are defined later in this Guide, however, drug courts may wish to use different rating scales or definitions. The ratings used in this tool when aggregated, are intended to give drug courts some idea about the most frequent areas of difficulty their participants experience in early recovery. By understanding these issues, the court may then wish to address these issues or modify their case management services to participants prior to their discharge. The ratings of the stage of change the participant is in provides a similar opportunity for drug courts. When these ratings are aggregated, it may help the drug court better plan interventions to help clients maintain their action stage of change.

The RMC-i is scripted to permit a wide range of individuals to conduct the calls. Text fields are provided to permit notes to be made of pertinent answers.

***Interviewer Requirements***

No special training is required to administer the RMC-i; however, some experience with Motivational Interviewing techniques and drug court processes is preferred. Knowledge of community resources is also helpful and if available, a community referral information directory. Drug court coordinators, treatment staff, volunteer or paid mentors and others associated with drug courts are generally used to carry out recovery checkups. Interviewers should be familiar with federal and state confidentiality regulations.

***Interview Style and Approach***

The motivational interviewing style will optimize the inventory results. Motivational Interviewing is intended to strengthen a person’s motivation to make needed changes[[2]](#footnote-2) The RMC utilizes the OARS, a technique employed in motivational interviewing to enhance rapport and trust, and to encourage collaboration and information sharing:

**O -** The “O” in Oars means open ended questions. Thus the RMC-i questions are intentionally designed to encourage elaboration by the drug court participant versus offering yes or no responses. Participants are more likely to feel the interviewer genuinely cares about

them when they are intently listened to and when the other elements of motivational interviewing are used.

**A -** A refers to affirming. Affirming is the practice of positively verbally reinforcing the participant for thinking about or making changes or for the constructive steps they are

taking to solve problems. Statements such as “that is good thinking, good job, sounds like a good idea etc. are examples of affirming.

**R -** Reflecting is intentionally identifying the feelings the participant is experiencing and reflecting those feelings back. This is perhaps the finest art in listening; sometimes referred to as active listening. To be able to reflect the feelings of another person, one has to be willing to listen and empathize with the speaker in a collaborative relationship.

“It sounds like you must be feeling very frustrated…It is discouraging when…..” are examples of reflecting feelings.

**S -** The “S” represents the final step in listening which is to summarize what has been said or discussed in a conversation. When the interviewer is able to summarize the issues or concerns of the participant, he/she is likely to feel “heard” and understood.

Clearly, when one feels heard and understood, trust and confidence are more likely to emerge and the participant feels more inclined to ask for help that is needed. The RMC-I ends with summarizing.

***User Instructions:***

The RMC is divided into 9 sections. Each section is labeled with a title in all caps, bold text. The sections include Client Data, Greeting, Housing, Family/Social Status, Health Status, Substance Use, Financial/Occupational Stability, Criminal Activity, and Overall Summary.

Throughout the checklist, capitalized text is used for section titles, labels and instructions to the interviewer. Capitalized text is **not** read aloud to the respondents.

**RESPONDENT DATA SECTION:**

This section should be completed prior to calling the respondent. The Collateral line refers to the contact person identified by the respondent at the time the drug court coordinator explained the RMC process and should be a third person close to the respondent who will always know where and how to contact the drug court client. Examples are parents, spouses etc. Verify with the respondent that this information is accurate and the contact person is still the most reliable source.

**GREETING SECTION:**

The purpose of the Greeting section is to get the respondent comfortable with the interview process, build some initial rapport and to confirm their availability for the phone call.

The next six sections (Housing, Family/Social Status, Health Status, Substance Use, Financial/Occupational Stability, Criminal Activity) are divided into 3 sub-sections including the oral questions to be asked, MI prompts and a section summary that includes rating scales, a short yes/no question and an area to document impressions/follow-up plans and recommendations.

The question sub-sections include a series of open-ended questions that may be read to the respondent. Each question is preceded by a number followed by a line. Many of the questions have a corresponding follow-up question. The follow-up questions are labeled a,b,c, etc. For example, the first follow-up question to question number 3 would be labeled “3a” the second would be labeled “3b.” Follow-up questions also include instruction to the interviewer about when that follow-up question should or should not be asked. For example, the instruction “IF NO” indicates the interviewer will ask the follow-up question if the answer to the current question is no. These instructions are not read aloud to the respondent.

**OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS**

Most of the questions are open-ended, meaning there are not answer choices provided. These questions are designed to invoke more than just yes/no responses in the MI style. If you find you are getting very short, non-descripive responses, use probes such as “what else can you tell me about that?” or “what do you mean by that?” to elicit a more complete response. Record as much of the response that answers the question as you are able. Remember you will need to return to this information after the interview when you complete the summary for each section as well as the overall summary at the end of the checklist. The more key points you can record during the interview, the more complete your summary will be and thus your recommendations.

**SUBSTANCE USE SECTION**

In this particular section you will note that the first question that that is asked is whether or not the respondent is still under supervision [on probation or parole]. Be sure you follow the instructions carefully here and do not ask a respondent who is under supervision any of the specific questions about their use **if you are mandated to report any relapse to a probation or parole officer.** In some jurisdictions, this is a requirement of any court officer.

In the sub-section labeled **“MI Prompts,”** MI stands for Motivational Interviewing. Throughout the conversation you should provide affirmation to the respondent regarding the things he or she is disclosing in response to the questions. The text provided in the MI prompts is intended to be a guide to help you provide affirmation in that particular section.

The last sub-section is a summary section. This sub-section begins with “STATUS [CHECK ONE].” This sub-section should be completed***after the phone call is finished****.* Once the checklist is finished and the respondent is no longer on the phone, the interviewer will return to each of the section summaries and fill in the data. Each section summary includes a status scale a yes/no question, and in some instances, an MI section and space to document impressions, follow-up plans and recommendations. When completing the summary, first review the information collected in the question portion. Using that information record what you think the appropriate status of the respondent is. Choose only one status on the scale. Similarly, chose one MI level you think is appropriate for the respondent. The MI Level is intended to measure the respondent’s willingness to change. Then, choose yes or no to indicate whether or not the respondent communicated that they wanted assistance with this section. Finally record your thoughts, observations, and recommendations for the specific respondent for each of the sections. Record as much information as you feel is relevant in order to document any issues that may merit further attention or follow-up. Your impressions are important to record here because you may not be the person who makes the next RMC-i call. Include as much information as you think a new caller might need in order to acquaint themselves with the respondent. This is also the place to note your recommendations for future contacts or for other services from which the participant could benefit. It is not necessary to record everything the respondent says, particularly if it is off topic.

**OVERALL SUMMARY SECTION**

The last section in the checklist is the Overall Summary. This section provides the respondent an opportunity to share any other information they wish. Record their comments as close to word-for-word as you can. After recording their comments, summarize the positive issues, saying them back to the respondent then do the same for the help and problem areas you noted, saying these back as well. Finally, confirm the next contact with the respondent. **Always** end each call by affirming the respondent for their continued efforts at recovery.

**THE RMC-i AS AN OUTCOME TOOL**

The RMC-i can also serve as an outcome measurement tool for your drug court. If this is desired, select a random sample across all years for which RMC-i was administered. This can be done be selecting every other/ every 3rd etc/ participant name for a given year or time period. Or, you can include all participants if your court is smaller. By using the electronic version of the RMC-i. the data is aggregated and a report can be generated using graphs, charts etc. Google Docs allows you to select the type of chart you wish to use to summarize data in any given area of the RMC-i. Charts are then done automatically for you and you have only to prepare the narrative you wish to accompany each chart/table. When conducted as an outcome evaluation measure, your drug court can acquire valuable information regarding how graduates are doing over time as a result of the drug court services. Such data is vital to your quality monitoring program in your drug court and is also an excellent report to be shared with your stakeholders.

**ELECTRONIC APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

***Opening the checklist in Google Docs:*** Enter Google Docs.com in your browser. Then click on DRIVE in google apps. Then click on SHARED WITH ME and select Recovery Maintenance Check In.

***Filling out the survey form:*** Once the Recovery Maintenance Check-in is open, click on the eye icon in the upper right corner. Begin filling in information. Questions marked with an asterisk are required fields and must be filled in to move on to the next section. Select NEXT to move to the next section, or BACK to go back to a previous section. Once you have completed the questions and responses in the last section, select SUBMIT at the bottom of the page to complete the survey. You may then select SUBMIT ANOTHER RESPONSE to fill out another survey or close out of Google Docs.

You data will be stored in your own file in Google Docs for as long as you feel necessary.

1. Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, Volume 1 Issue 2 Journal of Drug Courts NACP [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Miller, Wm. Rollnick, Stephen; [2013] Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change, Third Edition Guildford Press [↑](#footnote-ref-2)