



SMART

(San Mateo County Mental Health Assessment and Referral Team)

A program of San Mateo County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

Fact Sheet

Below are some points about SMART that can make your lives in patrol easier when dealing with potentially mentally ill individuals, and can help you provide better service to the public.

"This isn't your grandfather's SMART car..."

- SMART cars are **NOT** just for transporting compliant 5150 candidates, who have no emergency medical needs. *(This accounts for an unfortunately high percentage of SMART calls.)*
- SMART cars **DO** benefit our paramedics by not tying up an ambulance for a "simple" 5150 call
- SMART cars **DO** benefit the 5150 candidate because the SMART service is free for them

SMART can do so much more for you!

SMART medics can write a 5150 hold.

What that means is: if you are on the fence about an individual meeting the criteria for 5150, you can call for a SMART car. If one is available, they will respond and do a further assessment. SMART medics are CIT trained and receive 50-60 hours of additional training in mental illness.

- In approximately 90% of 5150 calls where SMART was requested, officers/deputies have written the 5150 hold **before** SMART arrives *(this becomes important under the next section)*.
- Since SMART medics **can** write a hold, why not wait until they arrive to see what their assessment is? This is especially useful when it's not quite clear if the individual meets 5150 criteria.

SMART medics **PREFER to write the 5150 when they are involved.**

- If a SMART medic responds, they can generally provide a more detailed assessment than a patrol officer/deputy, as it relates to 5150 criteria.
- Sometimes, when the 5150 criteria isn't met, a SMART medic can offer other services to the individual, and even transport them to other resources, such as: First Chance, Palm Ave. Detox., and Serenity House
- SMART can transport across jurisdictional and county lines.
- **If the 5150 hold is already written by the officer/deputy when SMART arrives, SMART has no choice but to take the subject to PES.** In other words, it limits their options.
- **Involving a SMART medic not only covers your liability,** but can also open the door to other applicable resources to the public.



Properly utilizing SMART can limit weak 5150 holds.

We are all familiar with the "72 minute" hold. This can be due to many factors. One factor is a weak 5150 hold, either because it's poorly written, or the situation was "stretched" to meet criteria. Sometimes a hold is placed on someone who is high on drugs or drunk and PES kicks them out once they sober up, because there was no underlying mental illness. Other times, 5150 is an appealing "quick fix" to a situation even though it doesn't quite apply. We have to be careful of this. All these factors cause PES to be inundated with patients, which limits bed space. That's why we sometimes see our "clients" out of PES before we even write our report. Availing ourselves of SMART's expertise can help ensure a 5150 hold is appropriate. If not, SMART can offer other resources as previously mentioned.

Sometimes medical issues can mirror 5150 behavior.

- Some medical conditions, such as diabetes, certain infections, Alzheimer's, and dementia can mimic psychiatric symptoms and make a person appear gravely disabled.
- None of these conditions qualify under 5150 because the definition of gravely disabled, under W&I 5008(h)(1), requires that the disability is a result of a "mental health disorder".
- We can't expect our officers/deputies to medically diagnose individuals, so when they involve a SMART medic, they can also properly assess for any medical condition that may require emergency attention.

TO SUM UP:

- SMART is much more than a 5150 transportation service.
- SMART can take the weight off our officers'/deputies' shoulders and provide further assessment when the 5150 criteria seems murky.
- SMART medics can and **prefer to** write the 5150 hold.
- Involving a SMART medic can still address potential medical issues that cause 5150-like behavior.
- Utilizing SMART covers your department's liability

Obviously, if the 5150 criteria is clear, officers/ deputies should go ahead and write the hold. But, they can and should start using SMART more and more for all the "gray" areas. The more SMART is properly utilized, the more likely the program can justify a 24/7 service to the county. Please share this information with your coworkers.

Information provided by San Mateo County's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training program.