



AUG 25 2017

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Attorney General

Mark R. Herring
Attorney General

August 21, 2017

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Sam Grover, Esq.
Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

RE: Letters of July 3, 2017, May 5, 2017

Dear Mr. Grover:

I am writing to confirm our conversation of August 15, 2017. You wrote to the Virginia Department of Corrections regarding the Matrix program, an evidence-based substance abuse program, and COMPAS, which is a tool that assesses risks and needs for the offenders. In part, COMPAS helps develop case plans and set programming. As we discussed, the two questions that your clients complain of are question 101 and 102. They deal directly with the needs portion of what COMPAS does. The offender would not have an increased risk assessment based on answers to those questions, but instead would potentially have additional program needs associated with responses that deny religious involvement. To reiterate, the questions that are complained of have no relation to the risk assessment and would not increase the risk assessment for an offender. They relate only to an assessment of the need for programs. Regardless of the impact, however, the Virginia Department of Corrections has decided to remove those questions from the questionnaire.

The manual that accompanies the Matrix program has references to 12-step programs. Your clients complain of the references to 12-step programs. While the employees are trained not to refer to 12-step programs, the manual did have references to them. The manuals will have any references to 12-step programs removed, and staff will continue to be trained not to refer to twelve-step programs.

I believe that this addresses the concerns in your letters. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Diane M. Abato".

Diane M. Abato
Senior Assistant Attorney General/Chief

C. Scott Richeson, VDOC