An Overview of Collaborative Efforts to Improve Juvenile Risk Assessment

Joint Presentation to the JJPOC
April 16, 2015

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What Does Risk Assessment Accomplish?

Risk assessments are a key aspect of the *Risk-Need-Responsivity* Model

- Improve judgments about a youth’s risk to public safety.
- Guide intervention planning by highlighting risk-relevant life areas in need of change.
- Provide a source of baseline data for agencies
- Reduce costs by decreasing the use of intensive services for those who do not need them.
- Provide a common language used across agencies serving children and families.
Why are Risk Assessments Important?

• A focus on risk-relevant factors produces the greatest reductions in recidivism.

• Youth who receive services aligned with risk-relevant factors reoffend at a much lower rate.

• Punitive, sanction-based, control oriented interventions are associated with increases in recidivism.

• Most youth’s risk levels can be reduced. High risk does not mean untreatable.

• Preventing one 14-year old from continuing criminal behavior and becoming a chronic offender would save over 2.5 million dollars.
Components of Effective Risk Assessment

• Fostering a culture that emphasizes risk-reduction.

• Guidelines and policies for how risk assessment information will guide various decisions.

• Validated risk assessment instrument.

• Practitioner training in administration, scoring, and interpretation.

• Sustained feedback, coaching, and quality assurance.

• Practitioner skills that foster client awareness and motivation for changing these areas.

• Established data management systems and processes.
Georgetown University Recommendations for Risk Assessment Process

**JUDICIAL BRANCH**
Juvenile Probation

- Revise or replace current risk assessment instrument (JAG)
- Need for more defined differences in risk groups
- JPO concerns over the wording of questions and confusion over scoring of certain items

**DCF**
Juvenile Services

- Adopt validated risk assessment instrument
- Maintain a readily accessible database
- Create policies and procedures for using risk/needs assessments in decision-making
- Adequately train all line and supervisory staff on risk assessment and structured decision making
Goals for a Collaborative Risk Assessment Process

• Share a common skill-set across agencies in client engagement and risk reduction.

• Consistent risk assessment and decision making processes and practices in place for all agencies.

• Firm understanding of risk-needs-responsivity model and risk assessment to effectively communicate youths’ needs.

• Use complimentary risk assessment instruments with a long term goal to share the same instrument.

• Improve information sharing.
Development of Judicial Risk Assessment

• JPOs and supervisors surveyed; item analysis determined functionality of items.

• Developed new item pool and interview guidelines.

• Had two JPO workgroups pilot test new items and interview guidelines.

• Created procedures for integrating the new risk instrument with existing screening for mental health problems.

• The data collection version (version 3) is being finalized.

• Training for the select group of JPOs involved in the data collection is being developed.
DCF Juvenile Services Risk Assessment Plan

• Coordinate training activities and provide technical assistance for policy development and research.

• Adopted scientifically validated risk and needs assessment tool (YLS/CMI) and accompanying database.

• Selected a development team consisting of 10 JJSWs, a supervisor, a manager, a Clinical manager and the CJTS clinical supervisor.

• Train on risk assessment, client engagement, risk reduction skills, and use of results for case planning and structured decision making.

• Revise policies and/or procedures on the use of risk assessments.

• Revise and adopt the juvenile probation risk assessment instrument.
Collaborative Risk Assessment Timeline

**Spring 2015**
- Pilot - Train selected JPOs
- Adopt YLS/CMI
- Prepare JJSW Cohort

**Summer 2015**
- Statewide Pilot Version 3
- QA
- Train JJSW Cohort
- Create Practice Guide
- Implement YLS/CMI

**Fall 2015**
- Conduct reliability analysis
- Collect/analyze recidivism data
- Provide coaching/feedback
- Create QA procedure
Comparison of Risk Assessment Tools

**PrediCT**
(Prospective Risk Evaluation for Delinquency in CT)
- Criminal History
- Family Distress
- School Connection
- Antisocial Peers
- Substance Use
- Emotion Dysregulation/Mental Health
- Antisociality

**YLS/ CMI**
(Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory)
- Prior and Current Offenses
- Family Circumstances/Parenting
- Education/Employment
- Peer Relations
- Substance Abuse
- Leisure/Recreation
- Personality/Behavior
- Attitudes and Orientation