

**Illinois Association of
Problem- Solving Courts
Conference**

Assessing Risk and Need in the Criminal Justice
System

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Risk Assessments

- Goals
 - Increase foundational knowledge of risk assessments
 - Detail the importance of using risk assessments
 - Establish how risk assessments are the foundation in developing an individualized plan for the offender
 - Discuss how to select the assessment that works best for your needs

Risk Assessments - General Information

- Risk assessment - process of determining the **likelihood** of a future criminal behavior
- Likelihood – best evidence but not exact or 100%
 - Experience (gut feeling)
 - Actuarial (data driven assessment)
 - Combination = Best results
- Types of Risk Assessment
 - General (Level of Service Inventory – Revised)
 - Specific (Impaired Driving Assessment)
 - Both?

Risk Assessments - General Information

- Screenings and Assessments
 - Screenings
 - Quick/Shorter
 - Check eligibility
 - Allows the court to know if "next steps" are necessary
 - Assessments
 - Longer than screenings
 - More in depth
 - Provides severity or degree of significance
 - Completed by trained professional staff

Handout: *Screening and Assessment for PSC*; Illinois Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health and Justice

Risk Assessments - General Information

- Risk assessments and clinical assessments
 - Both are necessary as they serve different purposes
- Problem-Solving Courts are designed to have the best results when working with individuals who are high risk and high need

Risk Factors (areas driving criminal behavior)

1. Antisocial attitudes, values, beliefs
2. Procriminal peers (lack of prosocial peers)
3. Antisocial personality (low problem-solving, coping skills)
4. Criminal/antisocial history
5. Family factors
6. Low levels of educational/vocational achievement
7. Lack of involvement with prosocial leisure activities
8. Substance Abuse

Risk Assessments – Importance

- Most Effective Programs/Processes – Key Principles
 - Risk principle (who)
 - Need principle (what)
 - Responsivity (how)

Risk Principle (who)

- Focus on high risk offenders
 - High vs low risk = examples
- Intensive intervention early in the process for higher risk offenders
- Recidivism for lower risk offenders can increase with intensive interventions (treatment and/or supervision)

Need Principle (what)

- Focus on the risk/criminogenic factors (list of 8)
- Must utilize proven treatment/techniques to have results
- Dosage matters – how much intervention provided to the offender

Risk Assessments – which one?

- Valid
 - Has it been found to accurately measure what it is intended?
 - Valid assessments identify weaknesses through the research
 - We must use proven valid assessments!
- Reliable
 - Is the assessment consistent...does it render the same/similar results on repeated assessment?
 - We must use proven reliable assessments!

Risk Assessments – drives individualized plan

- Risk assessment is at the beginning and drives the rest of the process
- Problem-Solving Courts needs to have structure with room to address the specific risk/need of each individual
- Reassessment – allows a form of measure of progress

Risk Assessments – which one?

- Over 200 assessments currently available
- How to choose?
 - No need to reinvent the wheel...ask around
 - AOIC, Illinois Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health and Justice, other jurisdictions, national organizations, conferences, etc.
 - Each have strengths and weaknesses
 - Cost, method (paper/electronic), training?

Additional Resources

- Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
- Illinois Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health and Justice - <http://www.ilcoe.us/>
- University of Cincinnati – Corrections Institute
 - <http://cech.uc.edu/centers/ucci.html>
- Center of Court Innovation
 - *Demystifying Risk Assessment: Key Principles and Controversies (2017); Picard-Fritsche, Rempel, Tallon, Adler and Reyes*
 - http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Monograph_March2017_Demystifying%20Risk%20Assessment_1.pdf

Questions.....

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