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Risk and Needs Assessment
Enacted: **Mar 2015**

Historically, critical criminal and juvenile justice decisions about sanctioning and treatment of individuals were guided by the personal experience and judgment of public safety professionals with limited access to information about the person's likelihood of recidivism. Today, our knowledge about both criminal behavior and effective interventions has vastly improved. After decades of experience and study, researchers and practitioners have identified key factors that can help predict the likelihood of an individual returning to crime, violence or drug use as well as the types of supervision and services that are most likely to address those risks. Risk and needs assessment instruments are tools that incorporate this knowledge and provide actuarial, data-based information to practitioners at every stage of the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Sound assessment tools undergo a multi-stage, thorough development process in order to ensure they are appropriate for a given population (such as defendants, probationers, inmates, or parolees), as well as to minimize any potential bias based on environment or culture. The best tools are based on an analysis of a large number of cases, and their primary benefit is to match the right types of supervision and services for an individual to reduce their likelihood of reoffending.

To be clear, these tools are not meant to be perfect or stand-alone predictors of recidivism. They are not a replacement of professional judgment or discretion, but instead are designed to supplement the decision-making process by applying sound research and data. To ensure risk and needs assessment instruments are used to this end, jurisdictions must implement them properly and developers must continue to refine and improve them to incorporate new research and eliminate any unintentional biases. Where risk and needs assessment tools are appropriately validated and implemented, they can help reduce recidivism, reduce disparate treatment, and improve justice system decisions and transparency.

The following list of organizations reflects support of this statement:

- American Correctional Association
- American Probation and Parole Association
- Association of Paroling Authorities International
- Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- Association of State Corrections Administrators
- Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals
- National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies
- National Association of Probation Executives
- National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- National Criminal Justice Association
- National Sheriffs' Association
- Pretrial Justice Institute