

A National Inventory:

Assessment Instruments in the Criminal Justice System



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Presentation Overview

- Assessment instruments: an overview
- Vera Institute of Justice national survey on offender assessments
 - Key findings
 - Common tools

Assessment Instruments: An Overview

Assessment Instruments: An Overview

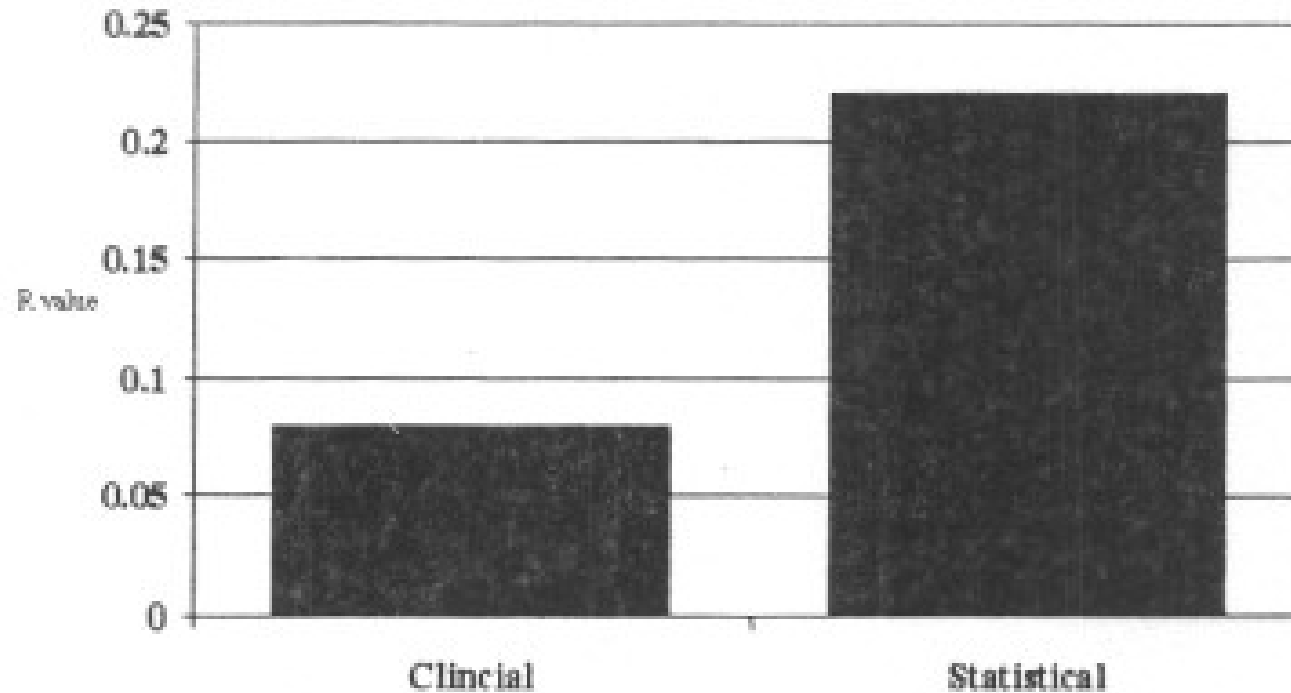
- Offender assessments are tools that predict outcomes (e.g., arrest, failure to appear) based on statistical (actuarial) information
 - Risk principle
 - Need principle
- Two types of factors measured:
 - Static
 - Dynamic
- 3 categories: (1) screening instruments, (2) comprehensive risk/need assessments, and (3) specialized tools

Assessment Instruments: An Overview

- Four generations of assessment tools:
- First generation: professional judgment (up to 1970s)
- Second generation: evidence-based tools (1970s-1980s)
- Third generation: evidence-based and dynamic (1980s-2004)
- Fourth generation: systematic and comprehensive (2004-present)

Assessment Instruments: An Overview

Figure 1
Comparison of Clinical vs. Statistical Prediction of Recidivism



Source: Goggin, C. E. (1994). *Clinical versus Actuarial Prediction: A Meta Analysis*. Unpublished manuscript. University of New Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick.

Assessment Tools: An Overview

- Points at which assessment tools are used:
 - Pre-trial
 - Sentencing
 - Probation
 - Corrections
 - Reentry
 - Parole

Assessment Overview: Key Terms

- Normed: ensure that results for new population are as valid as they are for the population for which the instruments were developed
- Reliability: produce the same/similar results for a group of individuals, even when administered by different assessors
- Validity: statistically determined to accurately predict outcomes for population
 - Face validity: instrument makes sense to those who use it
 - Predictive validity: instrument predict and measure risk (e.g., recidivism with statistical accuracy)

National Survey on Assessment Instruments

National Survey on Assessment

- Purpose: to develop a national picture of offender assessment in the adult criminal justice system
 - Identify common tools
 - Other implementation trends
- Surveyed: probation and parole agencies and releasing authorities
- January – February 2010
- Limitations

Key Findings

- Majority of supervision agencies use an actuarial assessment instrument
 - Over 61 community supervision agencies in 41 states reported using assessment
- Most common tools:
 - State-specific tools
 - LSI-R
 - COMPAS
 - LS/CMI

Key Findings

- Risk and need are routinely assessed
 - 82% reported assessing both risk and need
 - Releasing authorities: mostly risk
- Use of assessment:
 - Guide supervision levels, develop case plans, guide revocation decisions
- Sharing results is common
- Mostly electronic storage

LSI-R

- Developed by Canadian researchers: Don Andrews and James Bonta (Multi-Health Systems, Inc.)
- Most widely used and researched tool
- Consists of 54-item scale:
 - 10 subscales
- Screening tool: LSI-R:SV
- Limitations: gender-responsiveness

COMPAS

- Developed by Northpointe Institute for Public Management, Inc.
- Provides separate estimates violence, recidivism, failure to appear, and community failure
- “Criminogenic and needs profile”
- Includes strengths and protective factors
- Limitations: ethnicity

LS/CMI

- Same proprietors at LSI-R
- Refines and combines 54 LSI-R items into 43 items
- Includes strengths/protective factors
- 11 sections

ORAS

- Developed by University of Cincinnati: Dr. Ed Latessa
- Statewide assessment *system*
 - Promote consistent and objective assessment information
 - Improve communication and avoid duplication of information
- 5 tools:
 1. Pretrial
 2. Community supervision screening
 3. Community supervision
 4. Prison intake
 5. Reentry

Specialized tools

- Substance abuse
 - TCU, ASI, SSI
- Sex offenders
 - STATIC-99, MnSOST-R, RRASOR, VASOR
- Mental health
 - PCL-R, HARE

Conclusion

- Assessment is the engine that drives correctional programming
 - Cornerstone of EBP
- Which instrument you use is less important than how it is used

Questions?