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)
  - Fourth generation: systematic and comprehensive (2004-present)
Assessment Instruments: An Overview

Figure 1
Comparison of Clinical vs. Statistical Prediction of Recidivism

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
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?