Ohio Youth Assessment System

The Ohio Department of Youth Services and the University of Cincinnati are pleased to announce the creation of a new, fourth-generation assessment system. This system, entitled the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS), was initially born out of the RECLAIM study conducted in 2004. Based on the final report, it was clear that Ohio was in need of a risk/need assessment that provided the court with a standardized process in evaluating the risk and criminogenic needs of the youth it served. In order to develop the OYAS, assistance was solicited from ODYS, the counties, and community programs through the development of a pilot team that supplied insight and support to the project. Over the past three years, UC has interviewed and collected follow-up data on 2,500 youth throughout the Ohio juvenile justice system. Based on the results of these data five separate tools were developed to aid juvenile justice personnel with the measurement of risk, need, and responsivity. The following provides an overview of each of the five tools:

Diversion: This tool is designed to assist juvenile courts in identifying youth who can be safely diverted from further contact in the juvenile justice system. The results of the tool will provide court personnel with the ability to place youth in appropriate level of diversion programs. This tool consists of six items and can be completed from a file review or interview in about ten minutes.

Detention: This instrument is geared for use with youth being considered for detention. The results of the assessment will provide the court with the level of risk the youth posses while on pre-trial release. The instrument can be used at intake to aid in front-end decisions or the back door to release youth when necessary. This instrument consists of 6 items and is completed through a brief face-to-face interview, which takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Disposition: For those youth adjudicated by the court, this comprehensive tool will assess the risk of reoffending, identify important criminogenic needs as well as barriers to treatment, and provide case planning capabilities. This tool covers seven domains, including criminal history, family, education/employment, pro-social skill sets, substance abuse/mental health/personality, peers, and antisocial attitudes.

Residential: This tool provides residential programs the ability to accurately assess youth’s level of risk and areas of criminogenic needs at intake. The results of the assessment can inform the length of stay, case management/programming needs, and dosage of treatment. Similar to the Disposition tool, the Residential tool includes seven domain areas.
Reentry: The Reentry tool provides programs an opportunity to reassess youth after being in a residential program for an extended period of time. The Reentry tool is based on the same domains as the Disposition and Residential tools but is scored based on the youth’s progress in the residential program. The Reentry tool will be used in conjunction with post-program supervision to ensure successful transition to the community.

The Ohio Youth Assessment System provides juvenile justice personnel with an assessment system that expands as the youth moves deeper into the system. Systems that adopt the OYAS will be interested in using all five instruments to help make decisions across the continuum of care. Since September 2009 the OYAS is available on a fully automated, web-based system. The web-based system provides counties/agencies with the ability to integrate the OYAS into their daily work seamlessly. In addition, the OYAS is equipped with the capacity to assist staff with developing effective case plans that target the appropriate criminogenic needs while fully addressing any barriers that the youth may face.

Some of the advantages to the OYAS include:
- Provide important information to aid the courts and ODYS in making the best placement decision for youth
- Common language across courts and systems
- Developed and validated on an Ohio population of youth
- Scoring is integrated across the system
- Fully-automated with report generation capabilities
- Provides overall risk assessment based on recidivism
- Provides identification of criminogenic needs and targets for change
- Case planning modular
- Identifies barriers to service
- Allows for reassessment to gauge change in risk/need levels
- No cost for Ohio users
- Training for staff will be provided through ODYS and UC
- On-going research of system will be conducted by UC

Over the next couple of months more information will be available to the courts for their review including a final research report that will be available in June on the UC Corrections Institute website http://uc.edu/corrections. For more information regarding the OYAS or if you have any further questions please feel free to contact John Schwartz at 513-556-1913 / John.Schwartz@uc.edu or Brian Lovins at Brian.Lovins@uc.edu.