

The Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS)

In 2006, the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) contracted with the University of Cincinnati, Center for Criminal Justice Research, to create a set of research-driven tools that would provide risk assessments at multiple points in the criminal justice system validated on an Ohio offender population. Not all offenders are equal in their risk to reoffend, or their need for treatment and programming. Informed by a commitment to the principles of evidence-based practice, the intent was to separate adult offenders into risk groups determined by their likelihood of recidivating, and to identify dynamic risk factors (or criminogenic needs) to guide and prioritize appropriate and effective programmatic intervention.

The Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) has since been created using a research design that involved conducting in-depth structured interviews of over 1,800 offenders at different stages in the justice system: pretrial, community supervision, prison intake, and community reentry. After the interviews were conducted, offenders were tracked for approximately one year to gather follow-up information on recidivism. Six assessment instruments have since been created: the Pretrial Assessment Tool (PAT), the Community Supervision Tool (CST), the Community Supervision Screening Tool (CSST), the Prison Intake Tool (PIT), the Prison Screening Intake Tool (PSIT), and a Reentry Tool (RT). (See the chart on the next page summarizing the variables associated with the four primary assessment instruments and the principal stages to which they apply.)

Counties in Ohio presently rely on a wide array of predictive tools creating a great deal of variation in the assessment of offenders' risks and needs. The launching of ORAS which will occur in April 2011 is designed to facilitate greater objectivity and consistency in the assessment of offender risk across jurisdictions. The tools developed under ORAS are non-proprietary, and will be made available to authorized users (those certified in the application of the tools) at no cost. Training of staff on the various ORAS instruments is already underway supported by the Corrections Training Academy (DRC).

ORAS identifies risk levels and points practitioners towards needs areas that must be addressed to reduce recidivism. However, ORAS, in and of itself, is not a case planning / management tool. To assist criminal justice agencies, ORAS will be integrated with case planning / management within a structure that identifies and targets specific treatment domains.

The individualized assessments under ORAS are not intended to dictate to decision-makers what to do, or to remove professional judgment. Rather, the results are designed to better inform the decisions that are made at different stages of criminal justice processing. The tools provide for professional overrides and for making sentencing or placement decisions that depart from the ORAS-associated recommendations.

An ORAS Oversight Committee has been established to guide the implementation of this important initiative, and to ensure ongoing cross system communication. Its membership consists of key stakeholders from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Ohio Public Defender, the Ohio Supreme Court, the Ohio Judicial Conference, the Department of Youth Services, and external community correctional agencies representing probation departments, halfway houses and community-based correctional facilities.

There are numerous benefits to be gained by the adoption of ORAS statewide. The assessment of risk and needs will permit the sorting of outcomes and the placement of offenders into different risk levels for the first time by gender. The use of the tools will provide recommended levels of community supervision, and suggest programmatic and placement options. Over time with proper implementation

state, regional, and site-specific county profiles will be available offering offender descriptions, and identifying gaps in services and local resources. Finally, ORAS will also assist in the more efficient allocation of staff support and supervision activities.

This is an exciting time for Ohio. No other state or adult criminal justice agency has developed such a system with interconnected assessment tools that can be deployed at various stages in the justice system. Once ORAS is in place, it will enhance the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, thereby contributing to greater public safety, reduced recidivism, and successful offender reintegration.

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Phase	Initial Contact with the Criminal Justice System	Probation/Community Control	While in Prison	While in Prison	Parole or Post-Release Supervision
Tool	Pretrial Tool (PAT)	Community Supervision Tool (CST)	Prison Intake Tool (PIT)	Reentry Tool (RT)	Community Supervision Tool (CST)
Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminal/Supervision History (3 items) ▪ Employment (1 item) ▪ Substance Abuse (2 items) ▪ Residential Stability (1 item) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminal/Supervision History (6 items) ▪ Educ., Employ., Finances (6 items) ▪ Family & Social Support (5 items) ▪ Neighborhood Problems (2 items) ▪ Substance Abuse (5 items) ▪ Peer Assoc. (4 items) ▪ Crim. Attitudes & Behav. Prob. (7 items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminal History (7 items) ▪ Educ., Employ., Finances (6 items) ▪ Family & Social Support (5 items) ▪ Substance Abuse (5 items) ▪ Criminal Lifestyle (7 items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminal History (8 items) ▪ Social Bonds (4 items) ▪ Criminal Attitude & Behavior Problems (7 items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Criminal/Supervision History (6 items) ▪ Educ., Employ., Finances (6 items) ▪ Family & Social Support (5 items) ▪ Neighborhood Problems (2 items) ▪ Substance Abuse (5 items) ▪ Peer Assoc. (4 items) ▪ Crim. Attitudes & Behav. Prob. (7 items)
# Variables	N=7	N=35	N=31	N=20 <i>*administered only to those subject to Parole or Post-Rel. Supervision</i>	N=35
Outcomes Predicted	Failure to Appear Reoffend	Technical Violations Reoffend	Reoffend	Reoffend	Technical Violations Reoffend