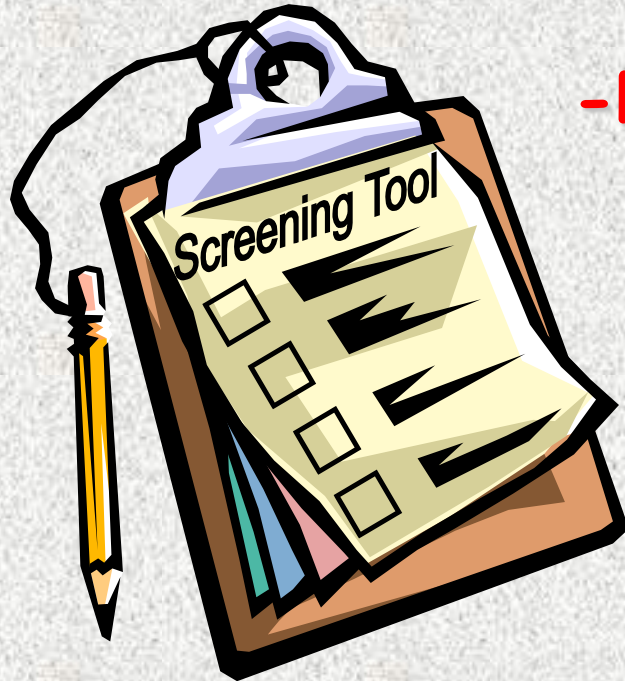


NJ Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

New Jersey's Statewide Risk Screening Tool (RST)



-Rationale-

-Development-

-Quality Assurance-

Presented by Jennifer LeBaron - National Conference 2008

Why a Single, Statewide Tool?

EFFECTIVE ADMISSIONS POLICIES

- ✧ Policies that help ensure detention is utilized consistent with its intended purpose
- ✧ In NJ, detention's purpose is set by state statute
- ✧ Therefore appropriate to develop statewide tool that reflected state-defined purpose of detention

Why a Single, Statewide Tool?

PURPOSE/BENEFITS OF RISK TOOL

✧ **Promotes Fairness**

Decisions affecting kids' deprivation of liberty are guided by criteria that are clearly related to the purpose of detention

✧ **Promotes Consistency, Equity**

Criteria are objectively measured and applied uniformly across cases, which results in similar outcomes for youth similarly situated in terms of delinquency

Why a Single, Statewide Tool?

FAIRNESS, CONSISTENCY, EQUITY

- ❖ NJ judiciary comprised of 15 vicinages under the operational umbrella of a statewide court system
- ❖ Chief Justice of New Jersey Supreme Court has constitutional authority over statewide management of the courts, assisted by an Administrative Director
- ❖ Detention decisions that result from referrals by local law enforcement are made by officers of this statewide court system (“Intake Officers”)

Why a Single, Statewide Tool?

FAIRNESS, CONSISTENCY, EQUITY

- ❖ Court's strategic plan includes "statewide consistency in practice from county to county" as a stated goal
- ❖ Upshot: fairness, consistency, and equity are **statewide** goals
- ❖ Statewide tool helps ensure consistency across court Intake Officers not only within a single county, but across counties
- ❖ Eliminates potential for "justice by geography"

Development of NJ RST

- ✧ Since aim was to develop one tool for statewide use, Risk Screening Tool development tasked to subcommittee of State-Level JDAI Steering Committee
- ✧ Representatives from state agencies and Local JDAI Steering Committees

Development of NJ RST

SCREENING TOOL SUBCOMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- ✧ Chief, Family Practice Division, Admin Office of Courts
- ✧ Chief, Juvenile Probation, Admin Office of Courts
- ✧ Juvenile Judge
- ✧ President-Juvenile Police Officers' Association
- ✧ Two Prosecutors
- ✧ Two Public Defenders
- ✧ Deputy Attorney General, Division of Criminal Justice
- ✧ AECF Consultant
- ✧ NJ Institute for Social Justice
- ✧ NJ Office of the Child Advocate
- ✧ Convened and Staffed by Juvenile Justice Commission

Development of NJ RST

SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE CHARGE

- ✧ Develop tool to guide decision-making at the point of referral to court Intake Services
- ✧ To be applied in cases without active bench warrant to detain, because in warrant cases decision to detain has already been made by a judge

Development of NJ RST

Summary of Tasks

- ✧ Come to consensus regarding the purpose and benefits of a detention screening tool
- ✧ Learn to use data to drive discussion and subsequent steps in development
- ✧ Identify and agree on the appropriate screening tool components
- ✧ Draft and weight the instrument
- ✧ Conduct studies of the instrument's impact on current decision-making
- ✧ Finalize a draft tool based on those results
- ✧ Consider a number of implementation issues

Development of NJ RST

Identifying Screening Tool Components

- ✧ Will this component help ensure detention is used for its intended purpose?

NJ Statute: “objective of detention is to provide secure custody for those juveniles who are deemed a threat to the physical safety of the community and/or whose confinement is necessary to insure their presence at the next court hearing” (N.J.A.C. 13:92-1.3).

- ✧ Do the data indicate this factor is important to decision-makers?
- ✧ Can this factor be objectively and readily measured?

Development of NJ RST

SCREENING TOOL COMPONENT	STATUTORY PURPOSE OF DETENTION		RELATED STATUTORY FACTORS
	PUBLIC SAFETY RISK	FLIGHT RISK	
# Current Charges ----- Most Severe Current Offense	X		Nature & Circumstances of Offense
# Delinquency Adjudications ----- Most Severe Prior Adjud	X		Prior Record of Adjudications
Warrants for FTA in Court		X	Record of Non-Appearance in Court
Current Detention Alternative Status	X		
AWOL from Residential Delinquency Placement		X	

Impact Studies

- ✧ Data collected for 725 calls to Intake Services - current and prior offenses, demographics, family info, time of day, referring agency, intake decision, circumstances of release (for detained youth), etc.
- ✧ Draft RST applied to 550+ non-warrant cases to compare screening tool vs. “real-life” outcomes
- ✧ Collected similar prospective data over 6 weeks (175 cases), observed processing of call to Intake as it was received, posed follow-up questions to ascertain factors most important to Intake Officers

Impact Studies

Results Summary

- ✧ General nature of detention decision-making will not divert *sharply* from current practice
- ✧ However, results suggest using tool will lead to fewer youth detained at the point of referral to intake services
- ✧ Cases accounting for shift toward non-detention are largely youth who, while detained by intake in the course of the screening tool studies, were released by the judge at the initial hearing
- ✧ Smaller group of youth not currently detained will be admitted to detention or alternative custody

Report to Supreme Court

- ✧ Prepared report documenting development and work of Subcommittee, presented to AOC and Supreme Court for review and approval to pilot
- ✧ Outlined next steps
 - ✓ Pilot sites to complete Site-Readiness Plans
 - ✓ Sites to develop local, site-specific policies and procedures manual
 - ✓ Develop training curriculum/materials, carry-out training
 - ✓ Develop quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation protocols

Cross-Site Consistency

TRAINING

✧ **Policy Training**

- ✓ State held “train-the-trainer” for locally identified policy training teams comprised of key leaders
- ✓ Local team held training for all those directly affected by/involved in implementing RST

✧ **Technical Training**

- ✓ State held training for staff responsible for completing/scoring the RST and their supervisors

✧ **Informational Training**

- ✓ Local team provided information to groups not directly involved with RST, but with an interest or indirect stake in its use

Cross-Site Consistency

QUALITY ASSURANCE

✧ **External QA Process**

- ✓ Developed formal QA protocol applied uniformly across sites
- ✓ Importance of “outside eyes”

✧ **Local Trouble-Shooting Sessions**

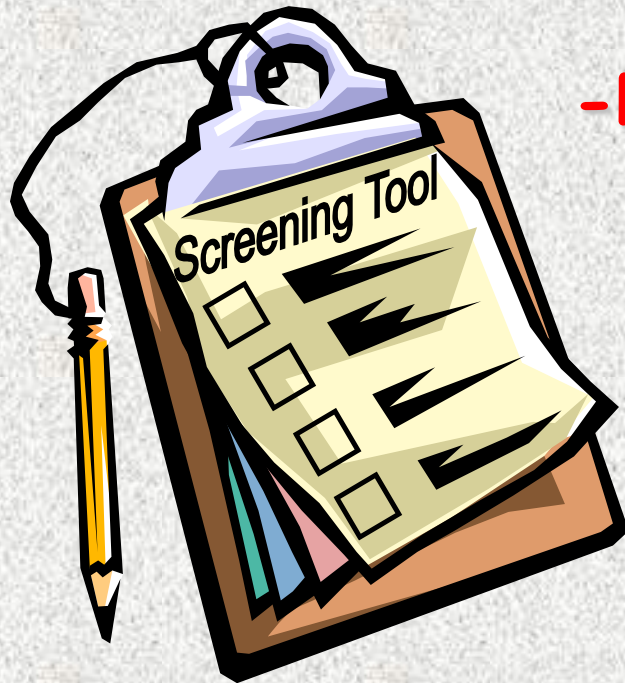
- ✓ Weekly/Bi-weekly meetings to address immediate issues raised via QA process and any concerns of intake officers implementing RST

✧ **State RST Subcommittee Oversight**

- ✓ Monitors statewide progress and cross-cutting issues

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