MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

EVALUATING WHETHER RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS ARE PRODUCING EXPECTED RESULTS

SUCCESES

States have adopted validated screening and assessment tools to identify youth’s risk of reoffending and service needs

States that Require the Use of Risk Assessments

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<th>NOT REQUIRED</th>
<th>ADMIN. REGS.</th>
<th>STATUTE</th>
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States that Require the Use of Mental Health Screening

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<th>1-2 DEC. POINTS</th>
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<td>CO, FL, GA, MN, SC, SD, TX</td>
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</table>

CHALLENGES

States struggle to ensure that assessment results are actually used to inform key decisions

Most States Conduct Assessments

But Don’t Consistently Use the Results:

- Low-risk youth receive formal supervision rather than being diverted from system involvement
- Court decisions are based on subjective criteria rather than on youth’s likelihood of reoffending
- Lengths of stay are arbitrary rather than matched to youth’s needs
- Services are offered indiscriminately rather than targeted on youth most likely to reoffend and their key needs

The Consequence?

- States have poor outcomes
- And use resources inefficiently

Source: jjgps.org
QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
How to use the results of validated risk and needs assessments to guide system decisions and improve outcomes for youth

KEY QUESTIONS POLICYMAKERS AND AGENCY LEADERS SHOULD ASK

» Are risk screening and assessment tools used to divert youth who are at a low risk of reoffending from formal system supervision and to ensure that incarceration is used sparingly?

» Are limited resources for services prioritized for youth who are at a moderate or high risk of reoffending?

» What is the average length of stay for incarcerated youth and time spent on supervision for youth in the community, and are these decisions based on objective risk and need criterion?

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUTH OUTCOMES

» Establish statutory requirements on the use of risk screening and assessment results to guide diversion, disposition, and length of stay decisions.

» Require that funding for services is used for primarily moderate- and high-risk youth.

» Track the use and costs of community supervision, incarceration, and services by youth’s risk level, and require that an annual report on this data is submitted to the legislature.