

Assessments.com introduces new evidence-based 4TH-Generation tool for adults:

The STRONG – Static Risk and Offender Needs Guide

Assessments.com, in collaboration with the Washington Department of Corrections, developed and implemented a new, state-of-the-art, evidence-based risk and needs assessment/supervision planning system for adult offenders. This tool, the STRONG, is now being implemented in a number of counties in California as well.

The STRONG has all of the advantages and features of existing Assessments.com systems, which are discussed in further detail below, but perhaps one of the most advanced features of the new tool is that it predicts recidivism based on a particular type of crime, i.e., high-risk for violence, property or drug offenses, which allows probation and corrections professionals to make better supervision, placement and re-entry decisions.

The new tool is a comprehensive, 4th-generation risk and needs assessment and automated case planning system. It is delivered through a web-based, user-friendly interface as either a web-hosted or client-server application. Either platform enables clients to manage intake, assessment administration, case plan management and outcome reporting – all from a single software application.

There are numerous time-saving efficiencies built in:

- The results of each individual's full assessment auto-populate individualized supervision plans focusing on criminogenic needs.
- Virtually unlimited queries on the data collected can be accessed quickly and efficiently ad hoc as needed, or through one of the built-in reports. Users, whether supervisors, managers, or officers, have at their fingertips all the information they need

to provide solid evidence to measure the effectiveness of individual assessments, policies, procedures, programs, case plans and even third-party program providers.

- Many clients also choose to auto-populate the assessment's criminal history domain from their own management information systems, saving significant time and increasing inter-rater reliability. Assessments.com can integrate seamlessly with most systems.

Here are some additional details about the STRONG adult risk/needs assessment and offender supervision guide:

Static Risk Assessment. There are two components to the assessment process. The first is a brief (26 questions) Static Risk Assessment which is comprised entirely of static factors, dealing specifically with prior criminal record. It produces three scores:

- (1) Felony Risk Score;

- (2) Non-Violent Felony Risk Score (High Property Risk/High Drug Risk); and
- (3) Violent Felony Risk Score. A formula is then applied to these scores to classify offenders into five risk classification levels based on criminal convictions:
 - High Risk Violent,
 - High Risk Property,
 - High Risk Drug,
 - Moderate Risk, and
 - Low Risk.

This instrument serves as a “triage” tool to ensure, in keeping with “The Risk Principle” (Dr. Andrews, Dr. Bonta, 1994 *Psychology of Criminal Conduct*), that treatment and public resources are devoted to the highest risk offenders. The tool provides an objective, consistent, and simple method of risk prediction and supervision level identification.

Offender Needs Assessment. Once the classification has been made, then the higher risk offenders receive the Offender Needs Assessment. Each of the individuals assessed have unique risk and protective factors that need to be identified and taken into account when forming a case plan for offender change. The Offender Needs Assessment includes approximately 70 questions in the following domains:

- Education (social achievement)
- Employment (social achievement)
- Friends (supports)
- Residential Stability (social achievement)
- Marriage/Family (supports/social achievement)
- Alcohol/Drugs (personality traits/substance abuse/criminal history)
- Mental Health (personality traits)
- Aggression (personality traits)
- Attitudes/Behaviors (cognitions)
- Coping Skills (cognitions)

Offender Supervision Guide. “The Need Principle” states interventions should target the dynamic risk factors related to the criminal behavior. The Offender Needs Assessment was developed to identify, for each

offender, the dynamic risk/need factors to be targeted for interventions. It was also developed to help enable staff to understand how each offender could change in order to stay out of the criminal justice system and develop a pro-social law abiding lifestyle.

- For offenders who are high risk for violent offenses, valuable information must be gathered in order to know whether the violence arises from psychopathy, lack of control, an attitude that views violence as an acceptable behavior, or whether the violence is a deliberate way to achieve goals (instrumental).
- For offenders who are high risk for property offenses, valuable information must be gathered in order to know whether the criminal behavior arises from financial reasons, alcohol/drug problems, lack of employable skills, lack of ability to maintain employment, impulsivity, or an attitude that views stealing as an acceptable way to achieve goals.
- For offenders who are high risk for drug offenses, valuable information must be gathered in order to identify risk factors influencing the criminal behavior, i.e. economic reasons, chemical dependency/addiction, anti-social lifestyle, companions, or lack of social skills.
- For moderate risk offenders, a broad spectrum of information covering all lifestyle factors is needed to identify and understand what is influencing the offender’s criminal behavior.

Integration, Auto-Population, and Reporting. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the offender supervision planning process, this electronic supervision guide is also able to capture offender and staff actions, intervention start and end dates, and provide intervention status progress notes. Further, it automatically generates criminal history from the client’s MIS, and also allows staff to manually enter additional information for offenses, violations, etc. not available in the existing system. The tools are also designed to interface seamlessly with other external systems at the client’s discretion. In addition, the application has comprehensive reporting functionality which

provides an electronic means of documenting offender and staff activities for offender change based on the auto-generated and captured data.

Benefits

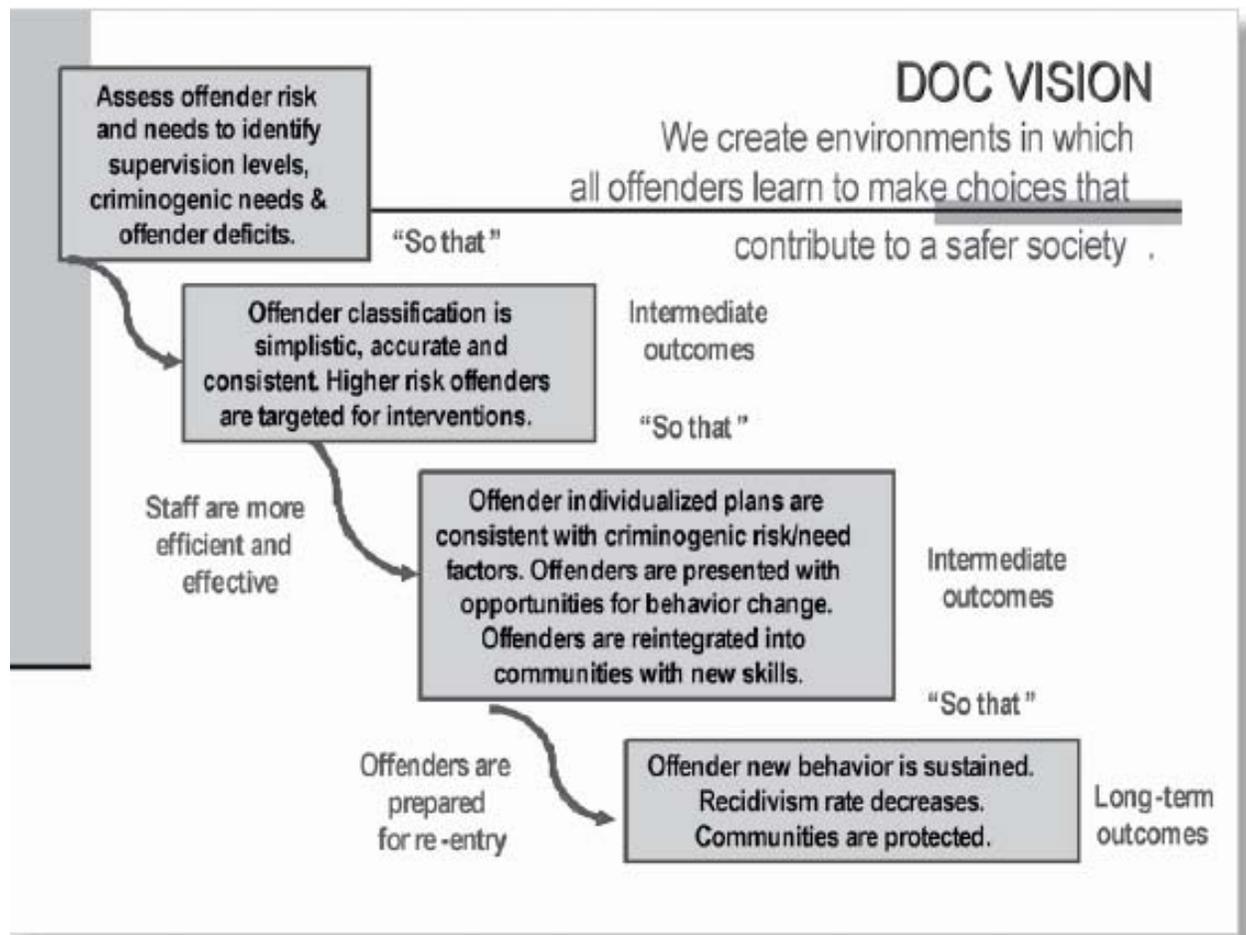
The new tools are being implemented to improve the classification of adult offenders in the community and make more accurate decisions regarding which incarcerated offenders are awarded early release. Other benefits include:

- Consistent method to document an offender's complete criminal conviction record.
- Increased objective risks and needs assessment capability.
- Increased accuracy of Offender Early Release Determination and Misdemeanor Supervision Eligibility decisions.
- Ease of system use leading to better understanding of risk and need results.
- Ease of access to offender information after assessment.

- Ease of querying specific offender information.
- Lessened difficulty in defending legal challenges related to offender liberty.
- Gender-neutral risk assessments.

ACA Standards. The new tools are specifically designed to meet American Correctional Association (ACA) standards:

- An objective assessment of each offender's risks and needs which specifies the type of programs needed.
- Provisions for regular review are required (at least every six months).
- Offenders are provided with interventions targeted to factors that relate to their individual criminal behavior.
- Offender progress in the program is measured through an objective assessment at discharge.
- All offenses are mapped to the specific items in the static risk assessment.



Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)

This system addresses all the Principles of Effective Interventions:

- Risk Principle – The right offender identified by the Static Risk Assessment based on the offender's criminal conviction record.
- Needs Principle – The right risk/need factor(s) identified by the Offender Needs Assessment.
- Responsivity Principle – Information gathered in the right way. Assessors adjusting interaction style based on offender characteristics.
- Program Integrity – Consistent training and quality assurance of the applications of the risks/needs tools. Provides research-based programs.
- Professional Discretion – Assessor's ability to consider circumstances that are not captured by the assessment tools, that aggravate or mitigate risks/needs.

Risk Factors with Highest Correlation to Recidivism

- Antisocial Supports: Association with antisocial others; isolation from pro-social others.
- Antisocial Attitudes/Values: Thinking style is antisocial; rejects the validity of the law in general; high tolerance for criminal behavior.
- Antisocial Personality: Restlessly energetic;
- Impulsive; pleasure seeking; resentful/angry; callousness; poor problem solving/coping skills; early evidence of misconduct-lying, stealing, aggression; early experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sex.
- Criminal History: History of antisocial behaviors- juvenile and/or adult; uninterrupted history of misconduct beginning at an early age; variety of offenses; alcohol and drug use; disorganized lifestyle.
- Social Achievement: Poor education and employment achievement; low levels of rewards/satisfaction; instability of employment; inadequate financial means or income earned and limited personal satisfaction realized.

