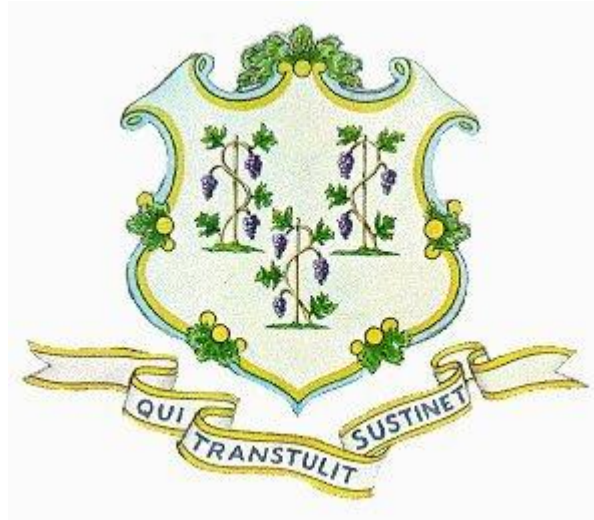


State of Connecticut



Criminal Justice Risk Assessment Strategy

**Department of Correction
Judicial Branch-Court Support Services Division
Board of Pardons and Paroles**

February, 2010

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	4
History.....	4
The Assessment Process in the Department of Correction	5
The Assessment Process at the Board of Pardons and Paroles.....	7
The Assessment Process in the Community	8
Status of 2009 Next Steps	10
Next Steps	12
Summary.....	12

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

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Executive Summary

In compliance with PA 08-01, the State of Connecticut Risk Assessment Strategy outlines a systematic plan for managing offenders based on evidence based practices related to risk and needs assessments. The administration of assessment tools begins from an offender's entry to the DOC to evaluate levels of risk and assignment of appropriate interventions, assignment of appropriate programs and need for suitable services. The BOPP utilizes assessments to assist with release decisions and setting appropriate conditions for risk management in the community. Assessments used in the Community at both Parole and Community Services and the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) guide levels of supervision and community-based program interventions.

The goal is to enhance public safety by implementing a statewide, multiagency system that assesses the risk and needs of each offender, assigns management and supervision requirements of offenders, and targets the needs of offenders through evidence based programs and interventions. The intended result is a reduction in recidivism and engagement of the offender in productive and responsible citizenship. Key components of the strategy include effective resource allocation, offender reentry services, strategic planning, and strong collaboration among the DOC, the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP).

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

Introduction

The State of Connecticut recognizes the relevance of integrating a risk assessment strategy into the process of guiding an offender through the criminal justice system. With the objective of implementing a continuum of supervision and intervention model which transitions an offender from incarceration through community reintegration, it is clear that points of contact through assessments provide essential information about the offender for enhancing public safety and reinforcing productive community membership.

Objectives related to the assessment process include:

1. **Target High Risk Offenders:** Assess offender risk level and target those who pose the highest risk for re-offending.
2. **Assess Criminogenic Needs:** Criminogenic needs, or problem areas that drive an offender's risk of recidivating, are identified through the administration of evidence-based assessment instruments. Common problem areas include substance abuse, criminal thinking, impulse control / violence, education and vocational needs, problem sexual behaviors and mental health needs, among others.
3. **Develop Intervention Plan:** A plan is developed based on assessed need areas, and implemented throughout the duration of the offender's incarceration period and into the community, setting behavioral and programmatic expectations.

History

Public Act 08-1 requires the DOC, CSSD and BOPP to collaborate on a risk assessment strategy that will accomplish the following:

- Utilize a risk assessment that accurately rates an offender's likelihood to recidivate upon release from custody
- Identify the support programs that will best position the offender for successful re-entry into the community

Through the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division (CJPPD), this strategy will be regularly reviewed in conjunction with the Monthly Indicators Report and recidivism studies.

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

The Assessment Process in the Department of Correction

The assessment process begins upon sentencing, shortly after admission to the Department of Correction.

When an offender is sentenced to a term over 2 years, the male offender is admitted to the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution to begin the 10-day assessment process. Female offenders are admitted to the York Correctional Institution and undergo a gender responsive and trauma informed assessment process at that facility. Male youths under the age of 18 have their youth specific assessment process administered at the Manson Youth Institution. Those offenders sentenced to less than two years are assessed and assigned programs as detailed in the OAP Manual.

The following assessment is used to determine the risk level of an offender:

- **Treatment and Programs Assessment Instrument (TPAI)**

In June 2009, the Office of Policy and Management and the DOC collaboratively rolled out the Treatment Program Assessment Instrument (TPAI). A 6 item questionnaire completed for all incarcerated offenders sentenced to six months or greater, the TPAI is designed to measure risk of recidivism following release and predict commission of violent crimes. The TPAI is also used to assist in appropriate recommendations for community release programs.

Offenders assessed at the low range of risk would not be assigned to programs and services, thus efficiently allocating limited resources to those with high risk and need for intervention. Research indicates that low risk offenders who are put into programs unnecessarily can actually have worse outcomes than those who do not receive any treatment.

The following assessments are used to assign programs to address criminogenic needs:

- **The Texas Christian University Drug Screen II (TCUDS-II)** is a screening tool used to determine the need for drug and alcohol treatment. If the need for treatment is determined, the more detailed Addiction Severity Index is administered.
- The **Addiction Severity Index (ASI)** is used to identify the severity of substance abuse problems and determine the level of treatment required. This 30 Question Addiction Questionnaire is used at the Walker and York facilities. The TASI (Teen Addiction Severity Index) is used at Manson Youth Institution.
- **Sex Offender** screening is done with the **Static-99 and Vermont Assessment of Sex Offender Risk (VASOR) instruments**. The Static-99 is used to measure the risk of sexual behaviors. VASOR is used with high-risk offenders to identify the propensity for violent sexual offending. Both assessments will determine the level of treatment needed.

State of Connecticut Risk Assessment Strategy

- **Unified School District #1 (USD#1)**, a state vested school district within the Department of Correction (DOC), administers academic and vocational assessments to include: an educational interview, a screening of general intelligence, assessment of academic proficiency levels, and aptitude and work skill levels. In addition to being used for appropriate educational placement, these assessments serve as a foundation for determining an individual's education and literacy proficiency to enhance further program participation.

The following assessments are being piloted in order to determine usefulness to community supervisory planning and treatment:

- The **Criminal Sentiments Scale- modified (CSS-M)** measures criminal thought patterns, beliefs regarding law enforcement and the court system and the willingness to tolerate a lifestyle that includes law violation. The CSS-M assesses the extent of criminal thinking, and will be the basis for assignment to the cognitive behavioral Thinking for a Change program.
- In conjunction with the CSS, the **Hostile Interpretations Questionnaire (HIQ)** measures internal hostile thoughts and beliefs and assesses how one will react in social situations and to stressors. It will be implemented to assess the propensity for impulsivity and violence. This assessment will be used to assign individuals to the Anger Management program.
- The screening version of the **Hare Psychopathy Checklist SV** is being piloted with Bridgeport Reentry Initiative (BRI) funds at Gates, York, Willard and Bergin facilities. The Screening Version is administered via interview, to indicate the presence of psychopathy.

The **Offender Accountability Plan (OAP)** is a prescribed and formal intervention process based on moderate to high need areas identified through assessment results. This process drives the development of a plan that follows an offender through the incarceration period and into the community. It includes both behavioral and programmatic expectations of the offender.

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

The Assessment Process at the Board of Pardons and Paroles

Statutory Guidance

Sec. 54-125a. (a) “A person...may be allowed to go at large on parole in the discretion of the panel of the Board of Parole...if (1) it appears...that there is reasonable probability the such inmate will live and remain at liberty without violating the law, and (2) such release is not incompatible with the welfare of society.”

Board Mission

The Connecticut Board of Parole is committed to protecting the public by making responsible decisions. Decisions are based primarily on the likelihood that offenders will remain at liberty, under supervision, without violating the law.

The assessment process of the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP) begins in conjunction with the DOC process, at the onset of sentence.

- The **Connecticut Salient Factor Score (CTSFS99)** is an objective risk assessment instrument designed to predict an offender’s likelihood of violent or other serious recidivism. This behavior is defined as any of the following actions during a three-year follow-up period:
 - A new conviction for a violent offense
 - A new conviction for any offense that results in a sentence of imprisonment of more than one year
 - Any return of an offender from the community for a period of 60 days or more

Consistent with Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) recommendations, the Board continues to focus efforts on implementing an empirically based assessment process to guide release decisions that includes both static and dynamic risk factors.

After passage of PA 08-01, the Board began to look into the feasibility of utilizing the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) at the front end of the system in place of the Salient Factor Score. This primarily was based on the fact that Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch currently uses the LSI-R and validated it on the Connecticut probation population. Additionally, the Parole and Community Services Division of the DOC began implementation of the LSI-R in determining appropriate levels of supervision for parolees.

Since the last report in 2009, DOC has implemented the TPAI in conjunction with dynamic needs assessments to triage offenders for programs based upon the Risk Principle. This initial DOC Risk Assessment process guides offender programming (i.e., development of the OAP) based on evaluation of both static risk and criminogenic (dynamic) needs. To make release decisions and appropriate conditions for risk management in the community, the Board relies on assessment of static risk as well as identification of and changes in dynamic/criminogenic need

State of Connecticut Risk Assessment Strategy

factors as a result of programs attended and completed during the inmates' period of incarceration.

Although the TPAI and SFS are both static risk assessment instruments, the Board and DOC aim to establish a standard assessment tool to reduce potential discrepancies and maximize efficiency by eliminating dual assessments. Toward this end, the Board, in conjunction with the CJPAC Working Research Group, is in the process of comparing the predictive validity of the TPAI and SFS, and determining what changes to the TPAI, if any, enhance its validity for assisting with release decisions by the Board. The Board is also awaiting validation results from the criminogenic/dynamic assessment instruments being piloted by the DOC (CSS-M, HIQ, PCL-SV) for potential use by the Board for assessment of criminogenic needs. In the interim, the Board continues to use the Salient Factor Score as a measure of static risk while the DOC Need Scores (e.g., Substance Abuse, Mental Health, etc.) and the OAP serve as the bases for identification of dynamic need factors.

Overall, the collaborative effort to establish a shared model and assessment process between the Board and the DOC will assist both agencies in meeting the goals set forth by Public Act 08-1. The assessment results can easily be passed on to the Parole and Community Services Division of the DOC and to the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch to compliment their use of the LSI-R for more effective intervention with and community supervision of offenders.

The Assessment Process in the Community

The principle assessment tools for the Parole and Community Services Division:

- The **Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R)** is a computer scored risk-needs assessment instrument comprised of 54 static and dynamic items across ten sub-scales. It is used by Parole and Community Services to guide levels of supervision and community-based program interventions.

This evidenced-based tool is used in many community corrections systems throughout the United States and Canada. In Connecticut, it is used by CSSD and many contracted non-profit providers.

- The **Adult Substance Use Survey-Revised (ASUS-R)** is a substance abuse questionnaire completed during the community supervision risk/needs assessment process for offenders age 18 or older, to assess alcohol and other drug use involvement and provides referral guidelines for various levels of services.

The combination of the LSI-R and ASUS-R provide parole officers with an effective means to reduce recidivism by addressing an individual's primary criminogenic needs.

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

Administered on all offenders with at least six months of community supervision, these assessment tools assist in the development of case plans that incorporate parole conditions, targeted interventions, and appropriate levels of supervision.

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

Status of 2009 Next Steps

NEXT STEPS	STATUS
I. Assessments	
1. Implement the Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS) and the Hostile Interpretation Questionnaire (HIQ) assessments	Being piloted at Walker CI during assessment
2. Enhance trauma informed, gender responsive and youth specific assessments and programs at York Correctional Institution and Manson Youth Institution	Assessments and programs are in the process of being developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSI-R Trailer Project – a component was added to the LSI-R by the University of Cincinnati specifically designed to address the assessment of women’s risks and needs. It is currently being piloted at York CI • Curriculum for staff training on management of youth is being developed for use at York and Manson Youth Institutions
II. Vocational Training / Employment	
1. Implement a strategic plan for Unified School District #1 (USD1) regarding vocational training to employment services	A DOC Job Developer is working with the USD #1 Reentry Class facilitators and vocational education programs to track offenders through program completion for transition into job center programs, i.e., preparation of resume / cover letter; interview and pre-employment assistance and connections with employers
2. Continue collaborative efforts with the Department of Labor (DOL) through the CT Works sites, further enhancing the efforts to guide the offender population toward gainful and stable employment	Ongoing
3. Establish relationships with the Chambers of Commerce to target employment efforts	DOC Job Center Counselors are establishing relationships and participating in joint meetings with prospective employers
III. Collaborations	
1. Build necessary linkages between DOC, BOPP	BOPP currently does assessments

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

and CSSD to ensure information sharing through the assessment process	during the DOC assessment process at MacDougall – Walker with a permanent Institutional Parole Officer stationed at Walker; building additional linkages is ongoing
I. Research and Evaluation	
1. Develop an overall evaluation and quality assurance component that assesses the effectiveness of this Risk Assessment Strategy in collaboration with CJPPD	Ongoing with CJPPD through the CJPAC, Research and Forecasting Work Group

**State of Connecticut
Risk Assessment Strategy**

Next Steps – 2010

- DOC – A retrospective study will be conducted to test how well the TPAI predicts recidivism
- The Parole and Community Services Division is reviewing the feasibility of using the TPAI as a screening instrument to determine which offenders receive a full LSI-R assessment. This strategy, based on risk principle, seeks to allow parole officers to focus available resources on higher-risk offenders initially identified by the TPAI. Research has shown a positive impact when community supervision interventions are focused on those offenders most likely to reoffend. Research has also shown little or negative impact when lower-risk offenders are required to participate in high intensity programs. It is hoped the TPAI will play a role in identifying those higher-risk offenders requiring further assessment and more intensive supervision.
- DOC and CSSD currently utilize the LSI-R and ASUS-R to guide levels of supervision and community-based program interventions; work will continue around the sharing of information to ensure well communicated and coordinated efforts for offenders under community supervision

Summary

The Department of Correction, Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Judicial Court Support Services Division are committed to the successful application, integration and evaluation of the components of this strategy, continually collaborating on efforts to share information and work toward common assessment tools.