MAKING RISK ASSESSMENT WORK THROUGH SCIENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Session Outline

- Effective implementation and pretrial assessment outcomes

- Common current challenges in risk assessment

- Case study exercise breakout

- Discussion

- Risk assessment-related projects

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND PRETRIAL ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES
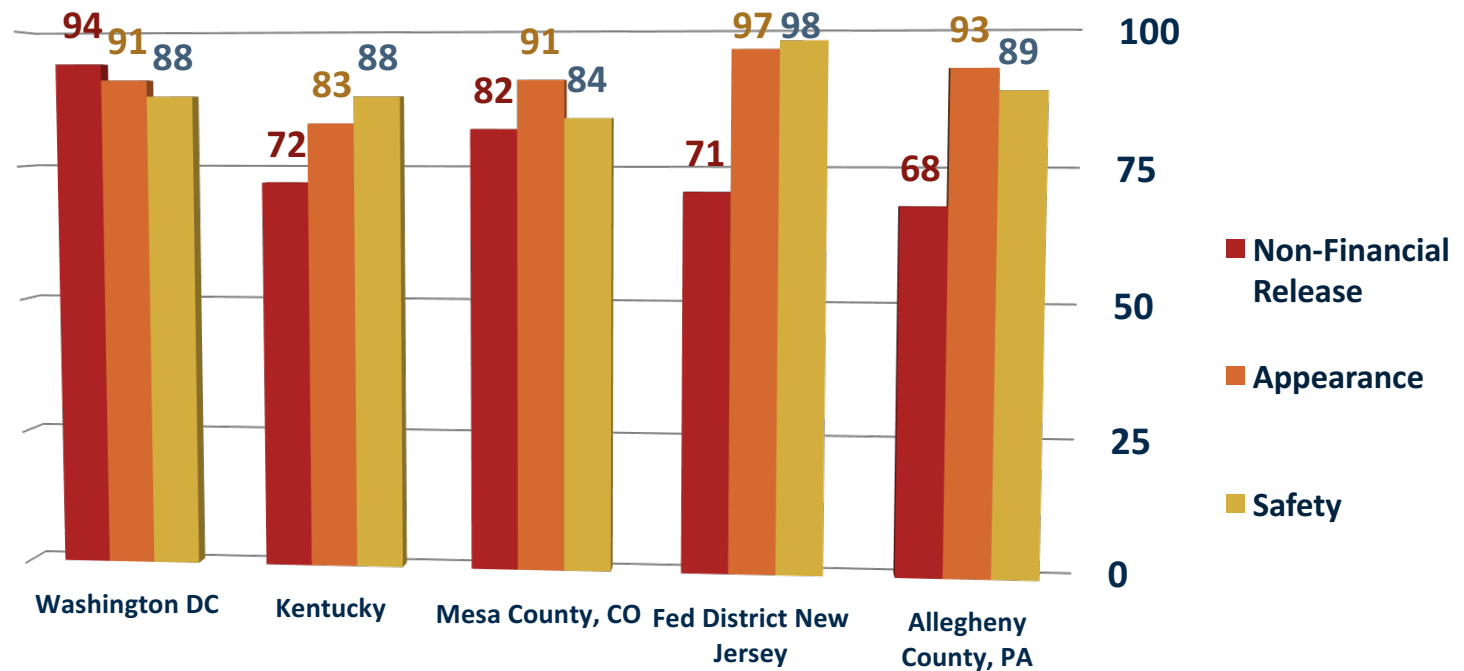
Defining Pretrial Risk

- What is "pretrial risk"?

- What do we know about defendants and risk?

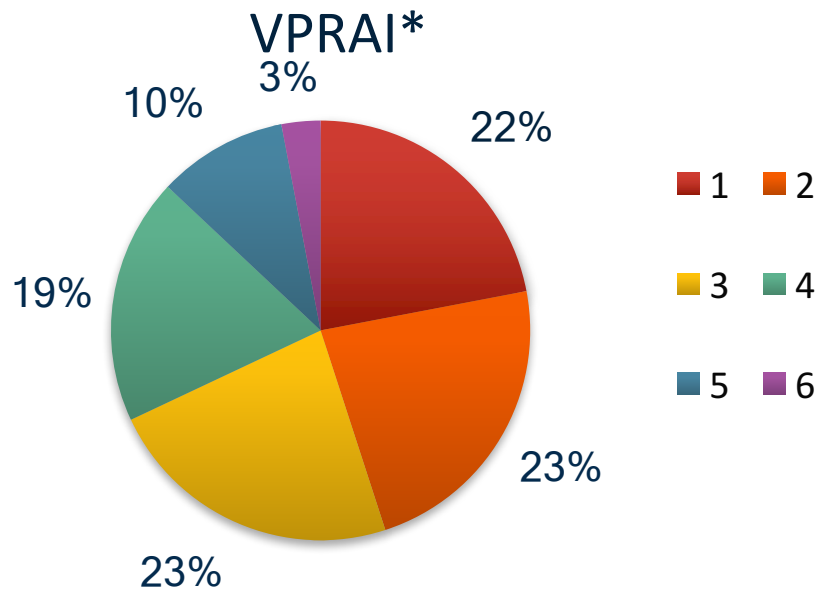- How good are we at assessing risk?

Defining Pretrial Risk

A defendant's likelihood of:

- Missing a scheduled court date

- Arrest on a new criminal offense
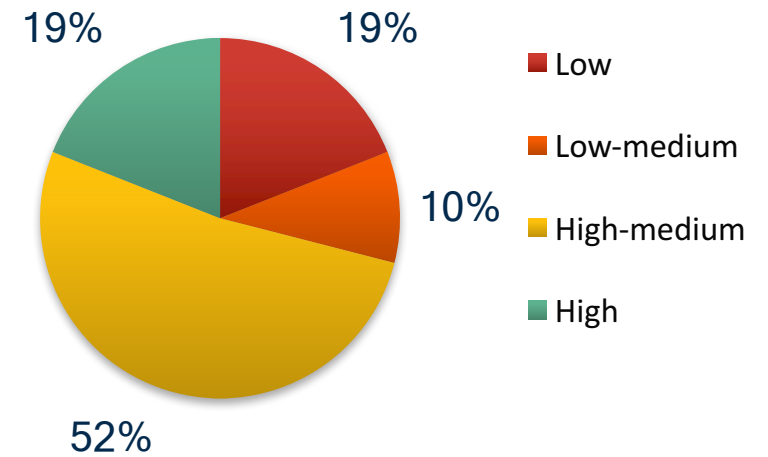
  - any offense

  - specific charge

Outcomes

Washington DC: Non-Financial Release 94, Appearance 91, Safety 88
Kentucky: Non-Financial Release 72, Appearance 83, Safety 88
Mesa County, CO: Non-Financial Release 82, Appearance 91, Safety 84
Fed District New Jersey: Non-Financial Release 71, Appearance 97, Safety 98
Allegheny County, PA: Non-Financial Release 68, Appearance 93, Safety 89

Legend:
- Non-Financial Release
- Appearance
- Safety

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Effective Outcomes

VPRAI*

- 22%
- 23%
- 23%
- 19%
- 10%
- 3%

Legend:
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

*VPRAI - Virginia Pretrial Risk Assessment Instrument

Allegheny County

- 19%
- 19%
- 10%
- 52%

Legend:
- Low
- Low-medium
- High-medium
- High

Outcome Measures
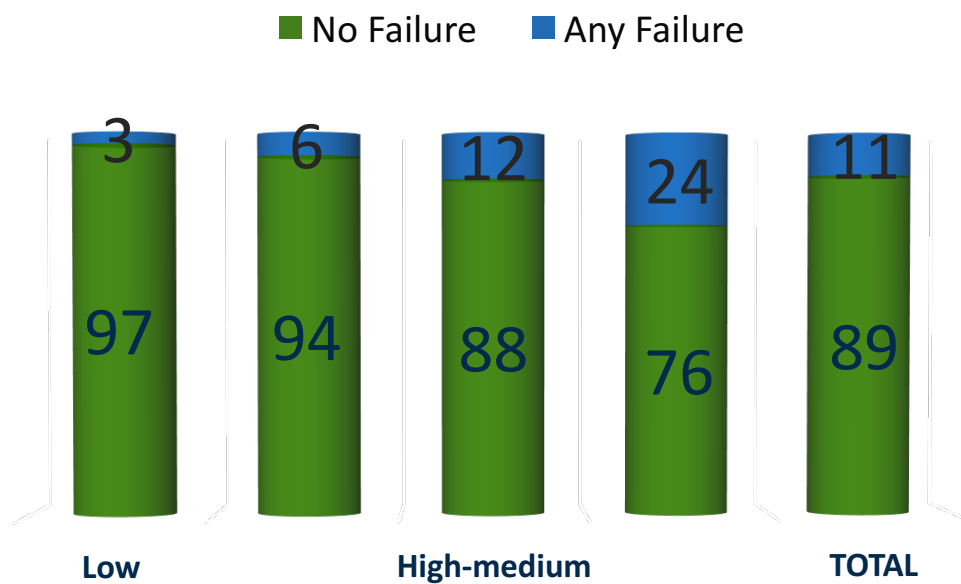
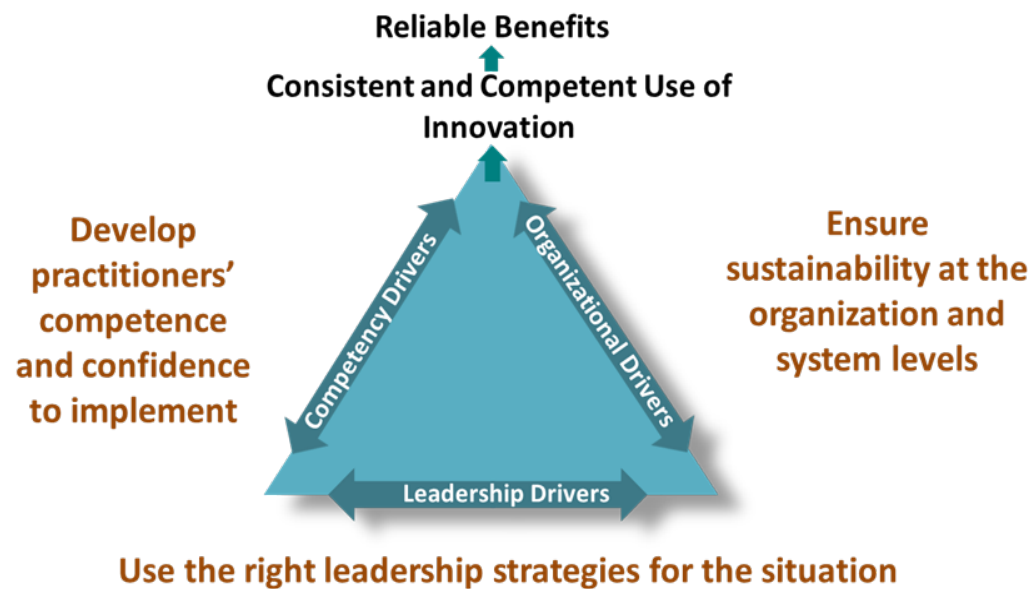2017 Allegheny County, PA outcomes using Public Safety Assessment tool

Proven Practices +Proven Methods

Implementation Science

- A specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions

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Drivers of Successful Implementation

National Implementation Resource Network Active Implementation Hub

Implementation Challenges

Technical Challenges

- Easy to define and involves a clear, linear path to solutions

Adaptive Challenges

- No simple, painless solutions
- Distinguish between what's essential and what's expendable
- Difficult to define, involves more complex solutions and are ever evolving pretrial detention population

Addressing Challenges

	Defining the problem	Locus of work	The solution
Technical	Simple	Authority	Apparent
Adaptive	Complex and Difficult	The Individual/Stakeholders	Unclear and Evolving / May require new learning / Experiments

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Technical vs Adaptive Solutions

	e.g.	Defining the problem	Who solves the problem	The solution
Technical	Broken arm	Broken arm	Doctor	Set and cast
Adaptive	Grandpa's vision too bad to continue driving	Loss of independence	Family, friends, doctors	Small changes, start w/not driving @ night

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Securing and Maintaining End User Buy-In

1. Lack of understanding of the risk assessment process in general
2. Lack of confidence in the specific risk assessment tool in use
3. Concerns about appropriateness of making decisions based on risk prediction
4. Reluctance to accept bounds on discretion

End User Buy-In Issues: Methods to Address

1. Lack of understanding of the risk assessment process in general
   - Training and education
2. Lack of confidence in the specific risk assessment tool in use
   - Validation and evaluation
3. Concerns about appropriateness of making decisions based on risk prediction
   - Consensus-building or pressure via performance measurement/monitoring
4. Reluctance to accept bounds on discretion
   - Consensus-building or pressure via performance measurement/monitoring

Risk Assessments and Disparity Concerns

- What's in the tool
  - Inclusion of specific factors that might be biased
    - E.g. employment history, neighborhood of residence
- What an assessment tool is
  - Predicting outcomes with bias as a component
- Not knowing what's in the tool
  - Proprietary tools and machine learning

Fairness in Risk Assessment Can Be Defined in Various Ways

- Accuracy equity: tool predicts equally well for different groups
- Statistical parity: same proportions of both groups categorized as likely to succeed/fail
- False positive/false negative rates and ratios
- Berk et al. (2017) "Except in trivial cases, it is impossible to maximize accuracy and fairness at the same time, and impossible simultaneously to satisfy all kinds of fairness."

Putting Risk Assessment to the Test

- Validation: Does the tool predict outcomes well?
    - For everyone and for key groups
- Performance Measurement: Is the tool being used in practice? What's happening to people in the different risk categories?
- Evaluation: Is risk-based decision-making producing more safety and equity?

BREAKOUT EXERCISE

Look at the following data and determine a release condition for each of the 4 categories.

With reference to the challenges you've encountered in your own community, discuss the challenges to having those release conditions actually happen for each category.

Identify one or more technical/adaptive solution.
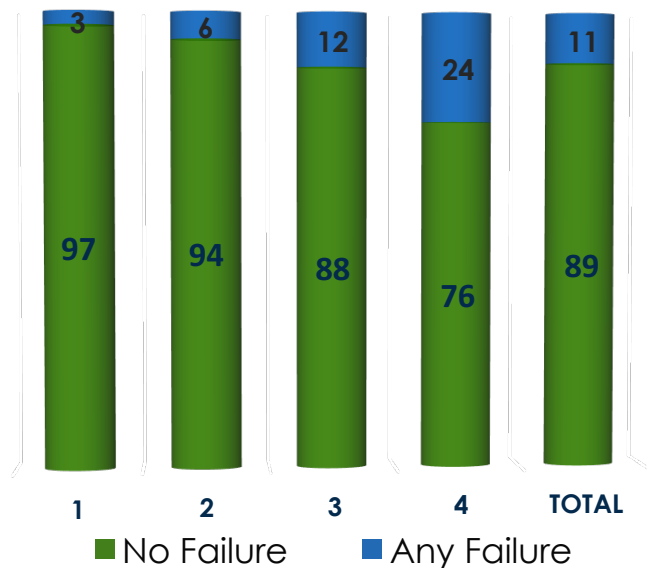
	Defining the problem	Locus of Work	The solution
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Risk Assessment Resources

- Risk Assessment Clearinghouse
  - Funded by BJA, operated by the Urban Institute
  - TA on risk assessment issues available to state and local justice agencies
- Quantitative Decision Making Tools in Criminal Justice

Thank You

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