

Risk/Needs Publications

Vincent, G. M., Paiva-Salisbury, M. L., Cook, N. E., Guy, L. S., & Perrault, R. T. (2012). Impact of Risk/Needs Assessment on Juvenile Probation Officers' Decision Making: Importance of Implementation. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1037/a0027186

The adoption of risk assessment tools has increased in popularity in the juvenile justice system due, in part, to recommendations by the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). However, very little is known about whether adoption of these tools actually effectuates change in the way young offenders are handled. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from 111 juvenile probation officers (JPOs) from six probation offices before and twice after standardized, rigorous implementation of the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk for Youth (SAVRY) or the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI). The purpose of this study was to examine JPOs' changes in attitudes and case management decisions following implementation of a risk/needs assessment (RNA) tool. There was a significant reduction in JPOs' perceptions of the proportion of young offenders who would reoffend. There were many shifts in JPOs' decision-making to be more consistent with Risk-Need-Responsivity practices, such as (a) making service referrals based on the fit between youths' criminogenic needs and services, and (b) assigning levels of supervision based on youths' level of risk. There was a shift in attention to more evidence-based dynamic risk factors. These changes occurred regardless of which RNA tool was used. Juvenile justice agencies are encouraged to adopt an evidence-based RNA tool using a sound implementation model in order to meet the objectives of the JJDP and RNR practices. Benefits and barriers to adoption of RNA tools by juvenile probation departments are discussed.

Vincent, G.M., Guy, L.S., Gershenson, B.G., McCabe, P. (2012). Does Risk Assessment Make a Difference? Results of Implementing the SAVRY in Juvenile Probation. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. 30(4): 384-405. DOI: 10.1002

An effective approach to reducing recidivism is, first, to identify a youth's risk of reoffending and then to match the intensity of interventions to that risk level. This pre-post quasi-experimental, prospective study compared 247 (pre) with 217 (post) adjudicated youths to examine the implementation of the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) and its effects on case management practices in Louisiana's Caddo parish probation office. The results indicated that placement rates dropped by 50%, use of maximum levels of supervision dropped by almost 30%, and use of community services decreased except for high-risk youths, but only after the SAVRY was properly implemented. This shift towards more appropriate allocation of resources that are matched to risk level occurred without a significant increase in reoffending. The implications for implementation and for use of risk/needs assessment in juvenile probation are discussed.

Vincent, G.M., Guy, L.S., Fusco, S.L., Gershenson, B.G. (2012). Field Reliability of the SAVRY with Juvenile Probation Officers: Implications for Training. *Law and Human Behavior*. 36(3): 225-36. DOI 10.1007/s10979-011-9284-2

Two complimentary studies were conducted to investigate the inter-rater reliability and performance of juvenile justice personnel when conducting the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk for Youth (SAVRY). Study 1 reports the performance on four standardized vignettes of 408 juvenile probation officers (JPOs) and social workers rating the SAVRY as part of their training. JPOs had high agreement with the expert consensus on the SAVRY rating of overall risk and total scores, but those trained by a peer master trainer outperformed those trained by an expert. Study 2 examined the field reliability of the SAVRY on 80 young offender cases rated

by a JPO and a trained research assistant. In the field, intra-class correlation coefficients were 'excellent' for SAVRY total and most domain scores, and were 'good' for overall risk ratings. Results suggest that the SAVRY and structured professional judgment can be used reliably in the field by juvenile justice personnel and is comparable to reliability indices reported in more lab-like research studies; however, replication is essential.

Perrault, R.T., Paiva-Salisbury, M., Vincent, G.M. (2012). Probation Officers' Perceptions of Youths' Risk of Reoffending and Use of Risk Assessment in Case Management. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. 30: 487–505. DOI: 10.1002/bsl.2015

Juvenile probation officers (JPOs) are required to make numerous decisions about the case management of young offenders on a daily basis. This multi-site study examined JPOs' (N = 64) perceptions of the typical youth's risk of reoffending before implementation of a risk/needs assessment (RNA) tool, and their self-reported, case management decision-making after implementation of an RNA tool. Results indicated that JPOs tended to overestimate the likely base rates of reoffending while RNA tool estimates were more accurate. Further, most JPOs appeared to be making service referral and placement decisions commensurate with youths' risk levels, regardless of whether they claimed to use the RNA tool in their decisions. Variability in application of risk to case management practices was more a function of the probation office than of the specific JPO. Implications for use of risk assessment in juvenile probation are discussed.

Vincent, G.M., Chapman, J., Cook, N.E. (2011). Risk-Needs Assessment in Juvenile Justice: Predictive Validity of the SAVRY, Racial Differences, and the Contribution of Needs Factors. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 38(1): 42-62. DOI: 10.1177/0093854810386000

The authors conducted a prospective study of the predictive validity of the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) using a 5-year follow-up period and a sample of 480 male adolescents assessed by juvenile detention personnel. Analyses were conducted to examine differential validity by race-ethnicity, the relative contribution of structured professional judgments of risk level, and the incremental validity of dynamic to static risk factors. Overall, the SAVRY total scores were significantly predictive of any type of reoffending with some variability across racial-ethnic groups. Youths rated as moderate to high risk by evaluators using structured professional judgment had greater odds of rearrest, but these risk ratings did not have incremental validity over numeric scores. Static factors were most strongly predictive of nonviolent rearrest, but dynamic factors (social-contextual) were the most predictive of violent rearrest. Implications for use of risk-needs assessment tools in juvenile justice programs and areas in need of further investigation are discussed.

Vincent, G. M., Terry, A., Maney, S. (2009). Risk/Needs tools for antisocial behavior and violence among youthful populations. In J. Andrade (Ed.) *Handbook of Violence Risk Assessment and Treatment for Forensic Mental Health Practitioners* (pp. 337-424). New York: Springer

This chapter reviews many considerations involved in implementing a risk assessment tool in a juvenile justice setting. In addition, the authors summarize the reliability and validity research evidence available to date for every risk assessment tool available for youth in juvenile justice settings.