ORAS is validated in Massachusetts

Bravo Massachusetts Probation Service employees. Your hard work has paid off!

MPS's use of the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) Community Supervision Screening Tool (CSST) and Community Supervision Tool (CST), which measure a probationer's risk to the community and their need for services, has been validated by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI). The validation of the tools was one of Probation's Strategic Plan goals and is essential to Probation Officers who create targeted case plans tailored to address behaviors driving anti-social thinking and actions.

MPS contracted with UCCI in January 2016 to evaluate the validity and reliability of both instruments and Probation's samples used to conduct the analysis are the largest ever tested by UCCI. A sample of adult probationers was used to conduct the analysis with the resulting samples including 11,640 offenders for ORAS-CSST and 10,548 for the ORAS-CST. One of the key findings is that the higher the score, the more likely it is that the individual will recidivate, according to Brian Mirasolo, Field Services Administrator and a member of the Risk/Need Committee. MPS has worked on the selection and implementation of this risk/need/case planning system in Massachusetts over the last five years.

Commissioner Edward J. Dolan said of the findings, "Research is clear that over supervising and treating and programming low-risk offenders has a criminogenic effect and as a result, it actually increases the likelihood of recidivism. Similarly, under supervising, treating and programming high risk clients increases their risk of recidivism by under responding and managing their criminogenic needs."

Dolan added, "Calibrating the tool and insuring that staff are administering it and using it to plan and supervise cases are critical to the effective use of these 4th generation risk assessment and case planning tools. That is precisely what was checked for in this validation process. He commented further, ""The validation and the work of Probation Officers shows that the application of the right mix of enforcement and rehabilitation leads to increased public safety."

ORAS Validation—An Overview

By First Deputy Commissioner Dianne Fasano

Within the past few months we shared news that the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI) was in the process of finalizing their report validating the use of the Ohio Risk Assessment System Community Supervision Screening Tool (ORAS-CSST) and the Ohio Risk Assessment System Community Supervision Tool (ORAS-CST) on our population in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Probation Service (MPS), after an open request for proposal process, contracted with UCCI in January of 2016 to evaluate the validity and reliability of both instruments. A sample of adult offenders under MPS supervision in the state of Massachusetts was used to conduct the analysis. The sample consisted of all offenders who received an ORAS-CSST and/or ORAS-CST assessment in 2014 and were classified for supervision categories based on empirically established gender cutoff scores. These assessments were limited to the initial ORAS assessment for the offender and only one assessment per offender if he/she had multiple assessments during the time period.

ORAS Validation—An Overview   **Continued from Page 1**

By First Deputy Dianne Fasano

UCCI found for both new arraignments and new convictions, offenders recidivated at an increasingly greater rate as levels of risk increased. The same held true, that is, the instruments were equally predictive, unaffected by categories of race or ethnicity for the two instruments. The ORAS-CSST and the ORAS-CST acted as would be predicted, with rates of failure steadily increasing as levels of risk increased. These relationships were found to be significant for the ORAS-CSST and ORAS-CST instruments for both outcomes of interest. High levels of agreement among raters were observed for the majority of ORAS-CST domain scores. On the whole, the Education, Employment, and Financial Situation and Neighborhood Problems domains produced the highest rates of reliability. Average inter-rater agreement overall fell just below 80 percent.
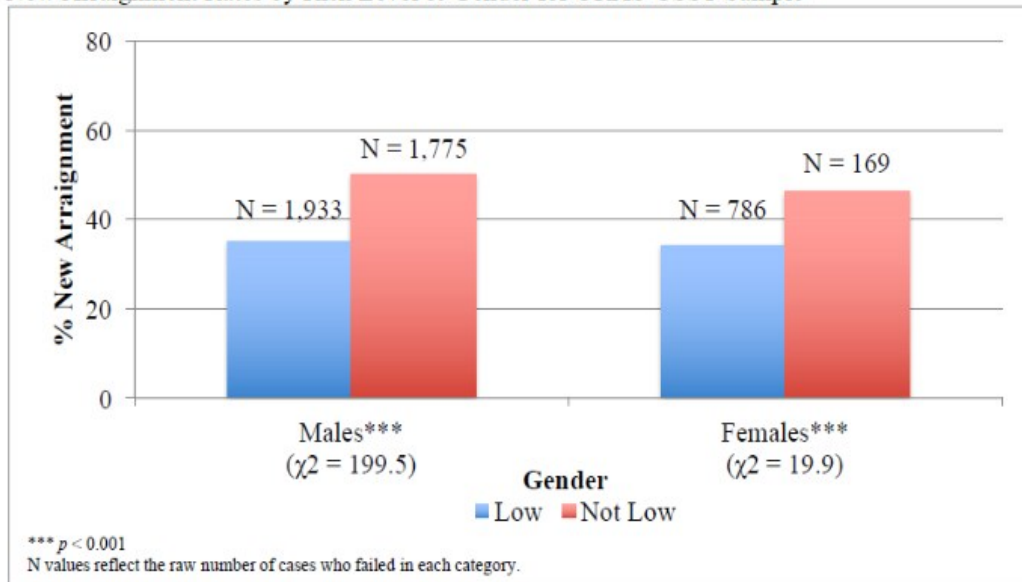
These successes are a credit to all of the hard work and dedication of Associate Probation Officers, Probation Officers, Senior Community Correction Probation Officers, Assistant Chief Probation Officers, First Assistant Chief Probation Officers, Chief Probation Officers, and support staff across the District Court Department, the Boston Municipal Court Department, and the Superior Court Department. Please know your daily efforts do not go unnoticed. It is because of your work this massive undertaking has been a success. Collectively, you have laid a solid foundation for the use of evidence based practices by the MPS. The use of these evidence based practices in the supervision of probationers will help the MPS deliver safer communities to the state and healthier lives to probationers. For all of this we thank you, especially those of you who volunteered to take on the massive task of training colleagues.

While the findings confirmed all of the great work done by officers in the field since use of the two assessments began in May of 2013, they also provided insight into areas MPS can target to build organizational **capacity to better match risk, needs, responsivity and dosage of response to the identified criminogenic drivers of our cases**. Increasing our capacity will help the MPS further promote law-abiding behavior in the community, reduce recidivism, and help us better meet our mission – increased **public safety through rehabilitation** . In the same vein, UCCI, based on the evaluation of MPS data, also provided recommendations on some changes for the organization to weigh.
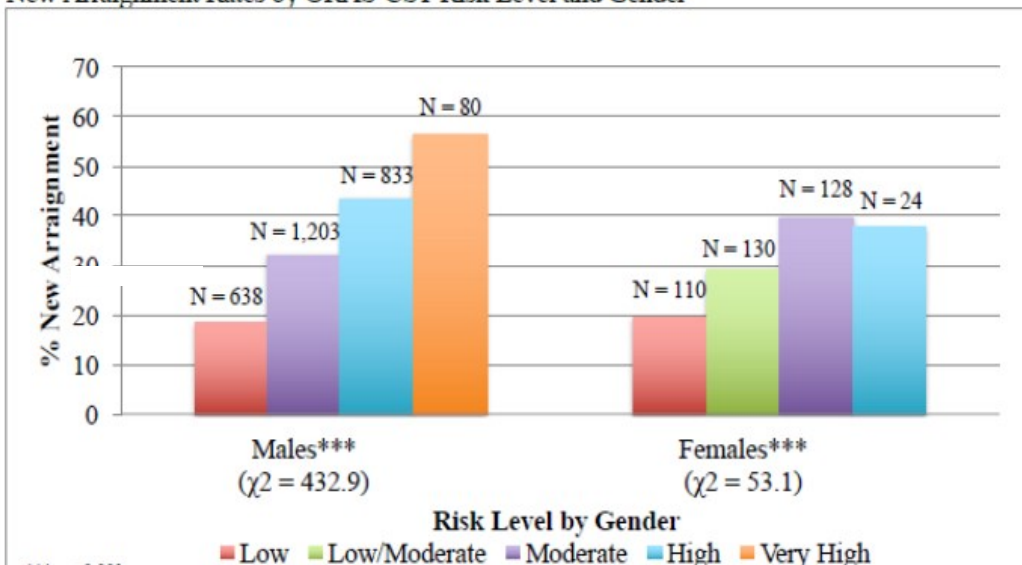
As far as the ORAS-CSST is concerned, the "not low-risk" subgroup showed higher rates of new arraignments and convictions compared to the low-risk ORAS-CSST subgroup. However, the low-risk group failed at a higher rate than would be expected and three of the four CSST items produced inter-rater agreement rates below 80 percent. Based on these findings, the MPS will adopt a UCCI recommendation that we implement a nine item version of the ORAS-CSST that will strengthen the inter-rater reliability and predictive power of the CSST screening tool. The 9-item screener along with related materials will be sent to the field shortly with an anticipated effective date of January 2, 2019.

The Gender Impact

New Arraignment Rates by Risk Level & Gender for ORAS-CSST Sample

Males***
($\chi 2 = 199.5$)

Females***
($\chi 2 = 19.9$)

Gender

■ Low ■ Not Low

*** $p < 0.001$
N values reflect the raw number of cases who failed in each category.

New Arraignment Rates by ORAS-CST Risk Level and Gender

Males***
($\chi 2 = 432.9$)

Females***
($\chi 2 = 53.1$)

Risk Level by Gender

■ Low ■ Low/Moderate ■ Moderate ■ High ■ Very High

According to the Validation study, gender had an impact on predictive outcomes. While both new arraignments and convictions resulted in offenders recidivating at an increasingly greater rate as levels of risk increased, the ORAS-CSST was not equally predictive of recidivism for the female sub-group. You may find this illustrated in the charts above.

The validation is complete: What's next?

Probation employees who were integral to the implementation of the tools in the Massachusetts Probation Service had this to say:

Brian Mirasolo, Field Services Administrator and Risk/Need Committee member

"The tools are the foundation to setting an evidence-based path in the supervision of adult probationers. They produce critical information that aids us in creating targeted case plans tailored to address behaviors driving anti-social thinking and behavior. Executing these case plans throughout the supervision process increases the probability of public safety and healthier lives."

A Joint Quote provided by

Gardner District Chief Probation Officer Diane Massouh and

Plymouth District Court Chief Probation Officer Carole Bambrick

"We are happy that the validation is complete and we look forward to the implementation of the recommendations for Massachusetts. We are confident that the newly certified ORAS trainers will lead the Massachusetts Probation Service in enhancing the already great work being done in the field."

TEAM ORAS

Our newest trainers

Tracy Callahan, Boston Municipal Court-Roxbury Division Probation Officer (PO)

Mark Mamet, Plymouth Superior PO

Chrissy Oliver, Quincy District Court ACPO

Heather Ayers, ACPO

Rachel Pawlina, Gardner District PO

Wendy Pelchat, Westborough District PO

Lori Sheehan, Springfield ACPO

Erin Horton, Field Services Operations Coordinator

TEAM ORAS

Continued from Page 4

Lynette Etienne, Fall River District PO

Patrick Perla, Worcester District PO

Kimberly Bowden, Middlesex Superior PO

Joe Del Negro, Worcester Superior PO

In Acknowledgement of the original ORAS Team

The success of ORAS would not be possible if it were not for those individuals who helped usher it in by piloting ORAS. In 2011, it was piloted at Lynn District and Essex Superior Courts. The following are those members of Risk/Need Assessment Committee which launched seven years ago:

Carole Bambrick, Plymouth District CPO

Jennifer Brady, Hingham District CPO

Michelle Carter, Newburyport District PO

Henry Culver, retired Gardner District CPO

Justin Fasano, Middlesex Probate & Family PO

Carmen Gomez, Chelsea District CPO

Jeffrey Jarasitis, Brookline District CPO

Michael Leahy, Fall River ACPO

Diane Massouh, Gardner District CPO

Paula Nimkar, Lynn District ACPO

Andrew Peck, Statewide Supervisor for Superior Court Probation

Andrew Theberge, Berkshire Superior PO

The Risk/Need Assessment Committee:

Francine Ryan, Region 6 Regional Supervisor (RS)

Elizabeth Daigneault, Region 5 RS

Pamerson Ifill, Region 1 Regional Supervisor

Brian Mirasolo, Field Service Administrator

Candace Vardaxis, Taunton District Assistant Chief Probation Officer (ACPO)

Paul Keefe, Project Manager for Information

Laura Dion, Westfield District Chief Probation Officer (CPO)

Marisa Cogliandro-Vaughan, Malden District ACPO

Anabela Pereira, Worcester District ACPO

Greg Carbonello, Middlesex Superior PO

Supervision Standards Advisory Committee:

Ellen Slaney, former Acting Commissioner of Probation and now retired

Dianne Fasano, First Deputy Commissioner of Probation

Richard O'Neil, former Statewide Supervisor for Probate & Family Probation now retired

Dennis Maietta, Stoughton District CPO

Carole Bambrick, Plymouth District CPO

A Special Thank You to the ORAS Team

Commissioner Edward J. Dolan

Commissioner Edward J. Dolan

"The validation was confirmation of all the hard work that has been done — led by Dianne Fasano and including so many other probation staff –over the past five years on the selection and implementation of this four generation risk/need/case planning system in Massachusetts. MPS now joins over 30 Probation jurisdictions employing this specific tool but more importantly the Massachusetts Trial Court and Probation Service are leaders nationally in the way this work is being done. It isn't just the validation of the ORAS, it is the evidence-based community supervision practices, the use of sanctions and rewards, cognitive behavioral programming, the training and recertification—all of those combine to meet the definition of current best and evidenced-based practice in the field. Evidence of the importance of this comprehensive approach is the recently released recidivism reduction data for Massachusetts."

Commissioner of Probation Edward J. Dolan

First Deputy Commissioner Dianne Fasano

First Deputy Commissioner Dianne Fasano

"I am proud of the great work being done by POs, PO IIs, SCCPOs, ACPOs, FACPOs and CPOs across the Commonwealth! The assessment process is the cornerstone of evidence based probation supervision. We rely on thorough and accurate assessments to build targeted case plans and guide our supervision strategies with the ultimate goal of positive behavior change and increased public safety. Thank you to all of you doing the work in the field and those of you who have trained and supported the work."

First Deputy Commissioner Dianne Fasano