

# An Overview of Collaborative Efforts to Improve Juvenile Risk Assessment

Joint Presentation to the JJPOC

April 16, 2015

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# What Does Risk Assessment Accomplish?

Risk assessments are a key aspect of the *Risk-Need-Responsivity* Model

- Improve judgments about a youth's risk to public safety.
- Guide intervention planning by highlighting risk-relevant life areas in need of change.
- Provide a source of baseline data for agencies
- Reduce costs by decreasing the use of intensive services for those who do not need them.
- Provide a common language used across agencies serving children and families.

# Why are Risk Assessments Important?

- A focus on risk-relevant factors produces the greatest reductions in recidivism.
- Youth who receive services aligned with risk-relevant factors reoffend at a much lower rate.
- Punitive, sanction-based, control oriented interventions are associated with increases in recidivism.
- Most youth's risk levels can be reduced. High risk does not mean untreatable.
- Preventing one 14-year old from continuing criminal behavior and becoming a chronic offender would save over 2.5 million dollars.

# Components of Effective Risk Assessment

- Fostering a culture that emphasizes risk-reduction.
- Guidelines and policies for how risk assessment information will guide various decisions.
- Validated risk assessment instrument.
- Practitioner training in administration, scoring, and interpretation.
- Sustained feedback, coaching, and quality assurance.
- Practitioner skills that foster client awareness and motivation for changing these areas.
- Established data management systems and processes.

# Georgetown University

## Recommendations for Risk Assessment Process

### JUDICIAL BRANCH Juvenile Probation

Revise or replace current risk assessment instrument (JAG)

Need for more defined differences in risk groups

JPO concerns over the wording of questions and confusion over scoring of certain items

### DCF Juvenile Services

Adopt validated risk assessment instrument

Maintain a readily accessible database

Create policies and procedures for using risk/needs assessments in decision-making

Adequately train all line and supervisory staff on risk assessment and structured decision making

# Goals for a Collaborative Risk Assessment Process

- Share a common skill-set across agencies in client engagement and risk reduction.
- Consistent risk assessment and decision making processes and practices in place for all agencies.
- Firm understanding of risk-needs-responsivity model and risk assessment to effectively communicate youths' needs.
- Use complimentary risk assessment instruments with a long term goal to share the same instrument.
- Improve information sharing.

# Development of Judicial Risk Assessment

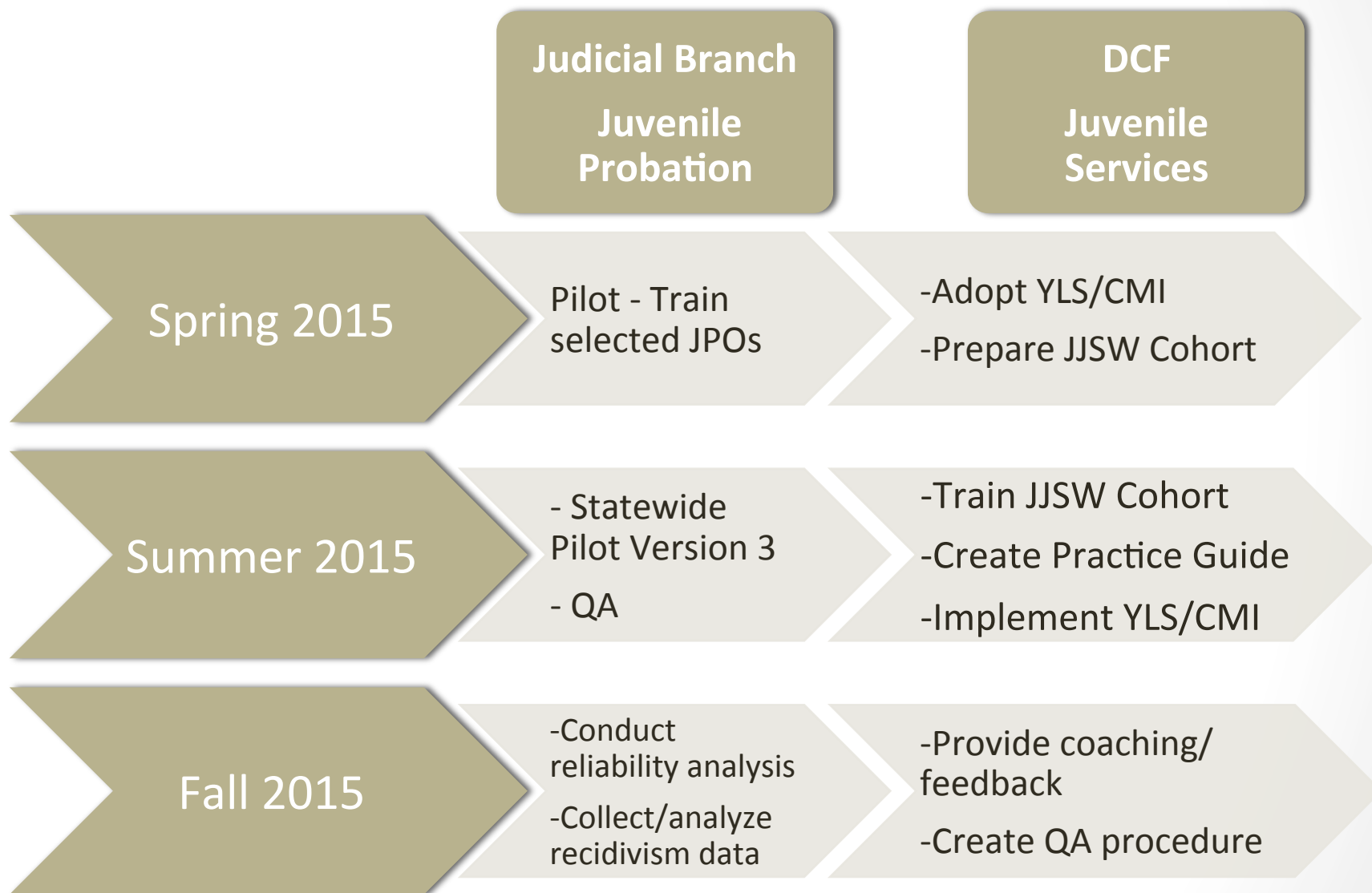
- JPOs and supervisors surveyed; item analysis determined functionality of items.
- Developed new item pool and interview guidelines.
- Had two JPO workgroups pilot test new items and interview guidelines.
- Created procedures for integrating the new risk instrument with existing screening for mental health problems.
- The data collection version (version 3) is being finalized.
- Training for the select group of JPOs involved in the data collection is being developed.

# DCF Juvenile Services Risk Assessment Plan

- Coordinate training activities and provide technical assistance for policy development and research.
- Adopted scientifically validated risk and needs assessment tool (YLS/CMI) and accompanying database.
- Selected a development team consisting of 10 JJSWs, a supervisor, a manager, a Clinical manager and the CJTS clinical supervisor.
- Train on risk assessment, client engagement, risk reduction skills, and use of results for case planning and structured decision making.
- Revise policies and/or procedures on the use of risk assessments.
- Revise and adopt the juvenile probation risk assessment instrument.



# Collaborative Risk Assessment Timeline



# Comparison of Risk Assessment Tools

## **PrediCT** (Prospective Risk Evaluation for Delinquency in CT)

Criminal History

Family Distress

School Connection

Antisocial Peers

Substance Use

Emotion Dysregulation/  
Mental Health

Antisociality

## **YLS/ CMI** (Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory)

Prior and Current Offenses

Family Circumstances/  
Parenting

Education/ Employment

Peer Relations

Substance Abuse

Leisure/ Recreation

Personality/ Behavior

Attitudes and Orientation