

PCJCC RAI Intake Instrument Validation Report June 2007

The PCJCC Intake Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) Committee conducted a validation of the Intake RAI using data from risk screenings conducted at intake from October 7, 2005 through December 31, 2006. There were a total of 5,830 screenings conducted on 3,299 youth during this time.

The procedures for conducting RAI validations that are outlined in Casey Foundation's *A Practical Guide to Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment* were followed for this study. The samples selected included low- and medium-risk youth who were released either at: 1) intake (i.e., never placed in detention), or 2) at a detention hearing that was held within 24 hours of the youth being placed in detention. These groups represent two distinct samples that were tracked separately. Recidivism and failure to appear were the two outcome measures of interest. Recidivism was defined as a new physical referral within the time at risk. Because the intake RAI is designed to measure risk for a brief period of time (usually from release to adjudication), the time at risk was defined as the average length of time to adjudication for PCJCC, which is approximately four weeks. The time at risk was defined as up to four weeks from release. However, there was interest among committee members in also tracking separately, youth performance during the period from adjudication to disposition, approximately one to four weeks. Therefore, a second time period was also examined. Because data on failure to appear is not readily available, this outcome has not been examined.

Youth Screened with the Intake RAI

There were 3,299 youth screened at least once during the study period. For youth with multiple screenings, the first screening was used for the study. As shown in Table 1, there were clear distinctions in youth being categorized as either low- (81%), medium- (14%), or high-risk (5%). This is an indication that the instrument is effective at distinguishing distinct risk levels.

Table 1. RAI Risk Score Categories

Risk Category	Number	Percent
Low-risk	2667	80.8
Medium-risk	476	14.4
High-risk	156	4.7
Total	3,299	100.0

Risk Scores of Youth Released

Of the 3,299 youth screened, 2,295 (70%) were released at intake or at a detention hearing. Of those 2,295 released youth, 2,071 (90%) were released at intake and 224 (10%) were released at a detention hearing. The majority of these youth were classified as low-risk by the RAI (Table 2).

Table 2. RAI Risk Levels for Youth Released at Intake and Detention Hearings

RAI Risk Level	Youth Released At Intake		Youth Released at Detention Hearing		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Low	1942	93.8	154	68.8	2096	91.3
Medium	129	6.2	70	31.2	199	8.7
Total:	2071	100.0	224	100.0	2295	100.0

Sample Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the youth released either at intake or at a detention hearing are similar to the characteristics of the general juvenile offender population served by PCJCC.

Namely, they are predominately male, an ethnic or racial minority, and from certain zip codes that have been identified in previous research as being the source of nearly half of the referrals to the court (Table 3). Conversely, it is not expected that the sample be representative of the entire PCJCC juvenile population in terms of criminal history. This is due to the fact that the RAI segregates youth based on past and current criminal offenses. Therefore, by definition, we would expect the released youth to be different from remaining PCJCC juvenile offender population.

Table 3. Demographics: Youth Released at Intake & Youth Released at Detention Hearing

Demographic	Youth Released At Intake (N=2,071)				Youth Released at Detention Hearing ^a (N=224)			
	Low Risk		Medium Risk		Low Risk		Medium Risk	
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White (non-Hispanic)	691	35.6	43	33.3	48	31.2	15	21.4
Hispanic	885	45.6	54	41.9	75	48.7	35	50.0
African American	204	10.5	19	14.7	17	11.0	15	21.4
Native American	120	6.2	11	8.5	12	7.8	4	5.7
Other	42	2.2	2	1.6	2	1.3	1	1.4
Totals	1,942	100.0	129	100.0	154	100.0	70	100.0
<i>Gender^b</i>								
Male	66.8%		86.0%		80.5%		80.0%	
Female	33.2%		14.0%		19.5%		20.0%	
<i>Age</i>								
Average	14.7		15.2		15.1		15.3	
Range	8-17		9-17		10-17		11-17	
<i>Zip Code</i>								
85705	8.4%		7.1%		11.2%		9.0%	
85706	12.2%		17.3%		13.8%		16.4%	
85711	6.5%		5.5%		7.9%		6.0% ^d	
85713	7.7%		7.1%		4.6% ^c		10.4%	
85746	8.4%		7.9%		6.6%		14.9%	
All others	56.8%		55.1%		55.9%		43.3%	

^a Average length of stay in detention was 19 hours for low-risk and 21 hours for medium-risk youth

^b Statistically significant difference with Chi Square, $p = .00$

^c There were two additional zip codes with 4.6%: 85716 and 85730

^d There were two additional zip codes with 6.0%: 85653 and 85714

Recidivism

For this study, recidivism was defined as a physical referral that occurred subsequent to the date the youth was screened with the RAI and released. Recidivism was considered a dichotomous variable, meaning that the youth either recidivated or not. In other words, once a youth was physically referred, additional referrals were irrelevant to the study. Failure to appear (FTA) at scheduled hearings is also an important outcome to be measured in determining the effectiveness of an intake RAI, but due to data difficulties, FTA has not been examined.

The RAI validation committee decided to track recidivism separately for the youth released at intake versus those released at detention hearings. It was believed that there might be important differences between these two groups because: 1) they were detained on overrides (held despite risk scores that would indicate release at intake) which indicates a potentially higher risk than the instrument indicated, and 2) they were held in detention for up to 24 hours. The committee also decided to include an additional time period: from five to eight weeks after release, because this is the average amount of time to disposition and placement on a supervised caseload.

Table 4 contains two sets of recidivism rates for both groups of youth and for the two time periods. One set covers all physical referrals, including violations of probation and conditions of release, and for physical referrals; the other set *does not include* these violations.

The recidivism rates range from 5.9 to 10.1 percent. According to the Casey Foundation rates up to 10 percent are acceptable; rates around 5 percent are considered quite good. Among the youth released at intake, the rate is lower for low-risk than medium-risk youth (5.9 vs. 10.1%), as would be expected. This is an indication that the instrument is working as intended. However, the rate for youth released at intake is virtually the same.

Recidivism rates drop slightly when POVs and CORs are removed for all groups except low-risk youth released at intake.

Table 4. Recidivism: Youth Released at Intake & Youth Released at Detention Hearing

New Referrals	Youth Released At Intake				Youth Released at Detention Hearing ^a			
	Low Risk (n=1942)		Medium Risk (n=129)		Low Risk (n=154)		Medium Risk (n=70)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Includes VOPs & CORs</i>								
Within 0-4 weeks	115	5.9	13	10.1	13	8.4	6	8.6
Within 5-8 weeks	85	4.4	5	3.9	11	7.1	6	8.6
<i>No VOPs & CORs</i>								
Within 0-4 weeks	110	5.9	9	8.0	7	5.4	4	6.8
Within 5-8 weeks	81	4.4	3	2.7	6	4.7	3	5.1

^a Average length of stay in detention was 19 hours for low-risk and 21 hours for medium-risk youth

Violations of probation and conditions of releases, public peace and offenses against property (most likely related to domestic violence) accounted for the majority of subsequent offenses.

Table 5. New Offenses (0-4 weeks): Youth Released at Intake & Youth Released at Detention Hearing

New Offense in 0-4 Weeks	Youth Released At Intake				Youth Released at Detention Hearing ^a			
	Low Risk		Medium Risk		Low Risk		Medium Risk	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Probation violation	4	3.5	4	30.8	3	23.1	0	0
Violation of COR	1	0.9	0	0	3	23.1	2	33.3
Misdemeanor against person	35	30.4	2	15.4	1	7.7	1	16.7
Public peace	32	27.8	1	7.7	2	15.4	0	0
Felony against property	18	15.7	2	15.4	0	0	1	16.7
Drugs	13	11.3	2	15.4	1	7.7	1	16.7
Misdemeanor against property	8	7.0	1	7.7	0	0	1	16.7
Felony against person	3	2.6	1	7.7	2	15.4	0	0
Obstruction	1	0.9	0	0	1	7.7	0	0
Totals:	115	100.0	13	100.0	13	100.0	6	100.0

^a Average length of stay in detention was 19 hours for low-risk and 21 hours for medium risk