



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Public Safety Assessment

January 2018

### Summary of the PSA

Nationally, approximately 10% of courts are using evidence-based risk-assessments to help judges decide if a defendant in pretrial should be released, supervised, or detained. In order to address this issue, Arnold Foundation developed the Public Safety Assessment (PSA), a pretrial risk-assessment tool that is designed to assist judges in making evidence-based release/detention determinations.

The most important decisions made during the pretrial phase pertain to whether a defendant will be detained or released before trial. Many defendants are low-risk individuals who, if released before trial, are likely to return to court, and highly unlikely to commit other crimes. Others present moderate risks and can often be managed in the community through supervision, monitoring, bail, or other interventions. There is, of course, a small group of defendants who should be detained because they pose significant risks of committing acts of violence, committing additional crimes, or fail to appear. It is vital to accurately distinguish among the low-, moderate-, and high-risk defendants, and identify those who are at an elevated risk for violence thus picking the "right" people to detain. The data-driven PSA tool helps evaluate that risk, and helps judges confidently make the important decisions that they do. In summary, more objective information will lead to better outcomes, more efficiency and safer communities.

### Research: PSA's are an effective tool

The PSA was created using a database of over 1.5 million cases drawn from more than 300 U.S. jurisdictions. The data was analyzed to identify the factors that are the best predictors of whether a defendant will commit a new crime, commit a new violent crime, or fail to show to court. The tool does not consider race, gender, or income.

### At a glance...

- Developed using data from over 1.5 million cases; 300+ jurisdictions
- Has been adopted in ~38 jurisdictions including states of KY, AZ, NJ, CO, CT, FL, OH.
- Designed to help address the ~\$9 billion spent nationally every year on detaining during pre-trial

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*The PSA does not replace a Judge's discretion; it enhances their ability to determine the risk of the person standing before them.*

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# FAQ's about the PSA:

**Do Judges need to make their decision on pre-trial based on the scores of the PSA?**

**Answer:** No. The PSA is a tool that will *help* the judge make such a decision. It gives them a metric by which they can confidently decide one whether someone should be release during pretrial, and if so, what level of supervision they might want to consider.

**Does every court in Iowa have to use the PSA?**

**Answer:** Eventually, yes. The PSA will be implemented throughout the state over time. Currently, select districts will begin to use the PSA. The implementation will be closely monitored and evaluated. In four counties, a thorough study will be conducted in order to verify that it is working as intended.

**Does it cost a court more to use the PSA?**

**Answer:** Possibly. Early implementation may require additional staff resources for some districts. However, over time, the anticipated savings from the use of the PSA tool should far outweigh the initial investment. Several studies have shown that once implemented, evidence-based pretrial decisions lead to reduced jail and eventually prison populations.

**Could the PSA's use lead to gender or racial bias?**

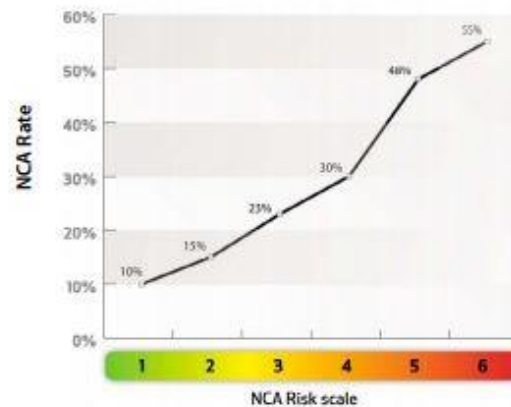
**Answer:** The PSA provides information to a judge that is race and gender neutral. Thus it is designed to enhance fairness and efficiency in the system.

**How will judges receive the information from the PSA?**

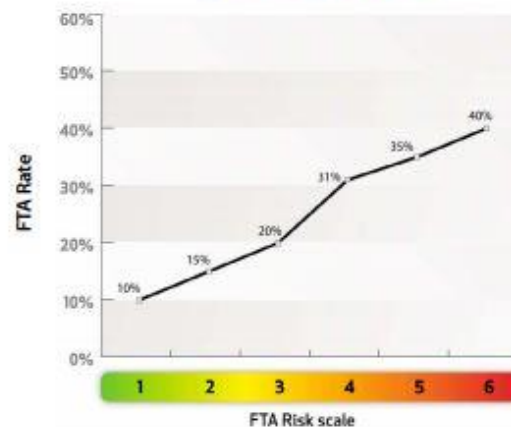
**Answer:** The State's PSA working group has been developing the standard report that will be used for everyone that needs to view a PSA. The report will be user-friendly and easy to interpret while also being thorough enough that a judge has the information they need to make an evidence-informed decision.

## PSA-Court Failure Rates by Risk Level

### New Criminal Activity



### Failure to Appear



### New Violent Criminal Activity

