

Screening & Assessment in Louisiana’s Juvenile Justice System

Stephen Phillippi, PhD, LCSW & Debra DePrato, MD

Each point in the juvenile justice system has a different task and therefore warrants a specific screening and assessment process. In light of this information, both the state and local parishes are now using different tools that guide decision-making and help match youths’ identified needs to services. These efforts include the introduction of detention risk screening instruments to guide detention decision-making and the implementation of the SAVRY to inform dispositional recommendations and better manage and support youth placed on probation supervision. **The table below provides an overview of several important tools currently in use at key decision points in Louisiana’s juvenile justice system and offers recommendations for additional tools that could be further developed to align Louisiana with national best practices.**

System Point	Informal FINS	Detention	Probation	Residential / Secure Care	Aftercare
Current System-wide Use	No consistent use (required or voluntary) of valid screening tools statewide	MAYSI-2 Mental Health Screen (used by many Louisiana detention facilities) Detention Assessment Instruments (DSI) to look at immediate risk and need for placement (used by many La. facilities but not statewide)	SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth) – An assessment tool for guiding intervention and supervision plans concerning violence risk in youth	CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) – Used as a case management tool working with the Coordinated Systems of Care SAVRY – used as repeat measure to demonstrate changes in risk/needs and make decisions regarding levels of supervision. Other consistently used diagnostic tools in secure care are unknown.	SAVRY – as a repeat measure ONLY if youth remains on probation. Could be used to help guide early release decisions and could help measure both youth and provider progress in aftercare.
Recommended based on successful pilots in various jurisdictions and best current evidence	JIFF (Juvenile Inventory for Functioning) - -Has been used successfully with FINS in Calcasieu MAYSI has been used to rapidly screen for mental health issues in Rapides in order to appropriately refer for assessment.	Detention Centers without these instruments should adopt both the instrument and procedures for guiding decisions and sharing information. Successful pilots are in Calcasieu, Jefferson, Caddo, Rapides	The 4 th JDC has a brief battery of screens to evaluate the appropriate referral to juvenile drug court. These instruments could be used in all 18 of the state’s juvenile drug courts.	Further analysis of facility populations & services are needed to make recommendations; however, health, mental health, developmental disabilities education, dental, & other key areas should be thoroughly assessed for youth in custody.	An aftercare system does not currently exist as a consistently utilized part of Louisiana’s justice system.

For more information download, “Sustaining Juvenile Justice System Reform: A Report to the Louisiana Juvenile Justice Implementation Commission,” at <http://publichealth.lsuhsoc.edu/iphj/sustainingreform.html>