

Universal Screening of Pretrial Detainees and Praxis for Release Decision Making in Milwaukee County

Milwaukee County worked to implement Universal Screening of pretrial detainees since 2007. In 2011, as a result of Milwaukee County's participation in the EBDM Initiative, the design and implementation plan for Universal Screening was evaluated and significantly modified. The following activities have been completed in an effort to align the project with EBDM principles and practices and to ensure successful program implementation.

- System-wide training for 200 stakeholders on the EBDMI and use of risk assessment information to inform key decisions.
- Validation and redesign of the Milwaukee County Pretrial Risk Assessment Instrument for use on both non-OWI as well as OWI defendants.
- Collaborative development of the Milwaukee County Pretrial Praxis, a tool to guide bail and release condition decisions.
- System-wide training for 325 stakeholders on Universal Screening, Evidence-Based Release Decisions, and application of the risk assessment and praxis information.
- Redesign of pretrial services programming to target resources to moderate/moderate-high risk defendants.
- Training on evidence-based pretrial risk assessment and investigation for all pretrial services staff and managers.
- Redesign of Milwaukee County Pretrial Services database in order to collect, analyze, and report key universal screening activities and outcomes.
- Begin development of regular system report for key pretrial population jail indicators such as average length of stay, average daily population, etc.
- Begin process of redesigning Milwaukee County's criminal in-custody initial appearance process. In 2012, first appearances will occur within 24 hours of booking into the Milwaukee County Correctional Facility-Central.

“One of our main priorities is to apply evidence-based decision making to pretrial release and detention determinations. While public safety is always our primary concern, we want to ensure that we are being good stewards of public funds and making the best use of limited community resources. We know that risk is inherent in all pretrial release decisions, so we want to base our determinations more on the risk posed by a particular defendant rather than the charge he is facing. We hope to minimize the disparity in release decisions for similarly situated defendants.”

- Chief Judge Kremers

In January, 2012, Milwaukee County implemented a praxis (knowledge into practice) to guide them in making release decisions. The praxis uses 6 predictors of pretrial outcomes including: cases filed, prior failures to appear, arrest while on bond, employment/care giver status, residence, and substance abuse to guide bond type, supervision level, and supervised conditions during the pretrial stage of the case.