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State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Evidence-Based Practices and COMPAS

There have been recent reports in the news regarding COMPAS, which is DOC's evidence-based criminogenic risk and needs assessment tool. Additionally, there have been a number of questions posed to DOC regarding its use of COMPAS and the role of COMPAS in Wisconsin's criminal justice system.

- The Wisconsin Department of Corrections is strongly committed to evidence-based practices, drawing upon the expertise of DOC employees; national, regional, and local criminal justice stakeholders; and national policy-makers like the National Institute of Corrections.
- The proliferation of evidence-based practices nationally within the field of corrections enables DOC to draw upon a number of sources for scientifically based, peer reviewed, and statistically validated measures of criminogenic risk and needs.
- Risk and need assessment tools, when coupled with evidence-based programming, are a powerful mechanism to drive behavioral change in inmates and offenders.
- DOC has a contract to utilize COMPAS to provide risk and need assessments to inmates and offenders. This tool is one of many available to Wisconsin criminal justice and corrections professionals to provide an evidence-based, statistically valid picture of recidivism risk in individuals.
 - COMPAS does not replace professional judgment on the part of individuals who are using COMPAS in decision-making and should not be the sole or deciding factor in a sentencing event.
- One tenet of evidence-based practices is the constant evaluation and refinement of business processes and tools to determine the most effective mechanism to evaluate recidivism risk. DOC will continue to evaluate the use of risk and need tools in a corrections setting and will make adjustments as needed to provide the most accurate assessment of inmates and offenders.
 - At this time, DOC does not anticipate changing the way in which COMPAS is used.

Questions outside your normal job duties or that you feel uncomfortable answering should be directed to your supervisor or WIDOCDataandResearchInquiries@wisconsin.gov.