# Managing Broward County's Jail Populations

## Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment

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# The Use of Risk Assessments in Correctional Settings

Risk assessments have been utilized in a number of ways:  pretrial decision making regarding detention/release, bail setting, determining the conditions of community supervision for probationers and parolees, and the appropriate placement of offenders in state and federal prisons.

Prior literature has identified four major generations of risk assessment tools with varying levels of sophistication:

- 1st generation: mid-20th century, based on unstructured clinical judgments of risk (criticized for potential for bias and error, and lack of statistical calculation of risk)

- 2nd generation: utilized additive point scales based on a few factors of information already available (no new data collected) such as current offense, criminal history, and mental illness diagnosis (criticized for lacking theoretical basis for factors, no discriminatory weighting, and sole focus of predicting risk)

- 3rd generation: used standardized, quantitative risk calculations, incorporated theoretically-driven factors, moved beyond sole focus of predicting risk to identifying criminogenic needs that could be targeted for change – proactive strategy (criticized for being too narrow in theoretical foundation by drawing only from social learning theory and lacking ability to distinguish between males and females (gender sensitivity)

- 4th generation (current generation): specifically designed to integrate not only process of risk identification and management, but also the selection of intervention modes and treatment strategies, and assessment of rehabilitation progress; broader theoretical framework drawing on risk/protective factors literature, strain theory, social control theory, and self control theory (in addition to social learning theory); assesses risk and makes recommendations for programmatic needs/placement

# The Use of Risk Assessments in Correctional Settings

4th generation risk assessment tools provide significant improvements over earlier instruments by incorporating gender-specific calibrations and by incorporating multi-theoretical factors that can be used to assess risk and document individualized needs assessment for multiple processes and treatment strategies within the criminal justice system.

Examples include:
- Level of Service/Case Management Inventory
- Violence Risk Scale
- Correctional Offender Management Profile for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS)
- Correctional Assessment and Intervention System

Risk assessments are an important tool for pretrial decision making because the process involves the fundamental tension between the court's desire to protect citizens from dangerous offenders, ensuring that the accused are judged before the law, and minimizing the amount of pretrial punishment that needs to be meted out to defendants whose guilt has not yet been established.

# Summary - Use of Risk Assessments

In the past, the exercise of judicial discretion was typically at the heart of pretrial decision making.

Research began to question pretrial decision making fearing that decisions were being made with incomplete or insufficient information and data.

The use of a standardized, comprehensive tool can significantly improve the decision making process and identification of a placement strategy (treatment if needed) while minimizing error and bias—and protecting public safety.

Identifying offenders who pose little or no risk <u>and</u> who are appropriate for alternative placement/release option – other than jail, assists in upholding their constitutional protections and minimizes the infringement on their daily lives.  This can, in turn, minimize the chances that offenders will become disconnected from social and community ties (family, friends, church, school, health care providers, employment, etc.) – which can lead to reduced recidivism and cost savings.

# Summary - Use of Risk Assessments

U.S. DOJ conducted a national study in 2003 – survey of pretrial service programs: reported that 1 in 4 pretrial programs relied exclusively on objective criteria when making release and bail decisions.

Campbell et al (2009) meta analysis that included an examination of 88 studies found that 4th generation risk assessment tools produced the strongest predictive estimates for violent recidivism

Research documented the predictive value of these variables when predicting risk and recidivism:
-     Charge type
-     Pending charges
-     Criminal history
-     Drug use or involvement
-     Prior FTA
-     Length of residence
-     Employment

COMPAS includes these variables and goes beyond these criteria to include social isolation, leisure time, and family criminality.

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment

COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) was implemented in 2008 by the BSO to assist with these tasks:

1. Assist the First Appearance Judge with pretrial release decisions by conducting risk assessment screenings with recommendations;

2. Guide determinations for appropriate supervision levels for the pretrial, probation, and day reporting and reentry divisions; and

3. Determine or identify the needs of offenders for case management purposes in all divisions which can positively impact the likelihood of success.

FSU conducted a validation of the COMPAS instrument only; the validation did not include the administration of the instrument or the selection of offenders assessed by COMPAS.

COMPAS is a statistically-based client assessment, classification, and case management system developed by the Northpointe Institute for Public Management.

COMPAS is designed to assess key <u>risk</u> and <u>need</u> factors in correctional populations by utilizing information obtained through official records, standardized interviews with clients, and self-report questionnaire information provided by clients.

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment Scales

- The COMPAS instrument is composed of 22 different scales that empirical research has identified as predictive of future risk behavior.

- The 22 scales are grouped into five main categories: criminal involvement, relationships/lifestyles, personality/attitudes, family, and social exclusion.

- The BSO began administering COMPAS in May 2008 and it is currently being utilized by three entities within BSO's Department of Community Control: (1) Pretrial Services Division (PSD), (2) the Day Reporting and Reentry Division (DRRD), and (3) the Probation Division of the Broward County Sheriff's Office.

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Outcome Measures

- The COMPAS instrument assesses three categories of risk: recidivism, violence, and failure to appear (FTA) (at a court hearing).

- Risk scores range from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) and offenders are grouped into Low Risk (1-4); Medium Risk (5-7); or High Risk (8-10).

- For the purpose of this validation, the three risk factors were defined as:

1. Recidivism:  Rearrest for any offense post release from jail
2. Violence: Rearrest for a violent offense post release from jail
3. Failure to Appear (FTA):  Failure to appear for a court hearing post release from jail

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Data

- The data used to conduct the validation of the COMPAS risk assessment instrument was extracted from the Jail Management System (JMS) maintained by the BSO.

- Booking data – January 1, 2009 to June 22, 2010.

- Release data – January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009.

- Failure to Appear (FTA) data – All FTA's occurring between January 1, 2009 and July 31, 2010 (n=26,733).

- COMPAS data - Results of the administration of the COMPAS instrument on offenders in 2009 (n=28,224). Separate records with risk scores for re-arrest, violence, and FTA supplied.
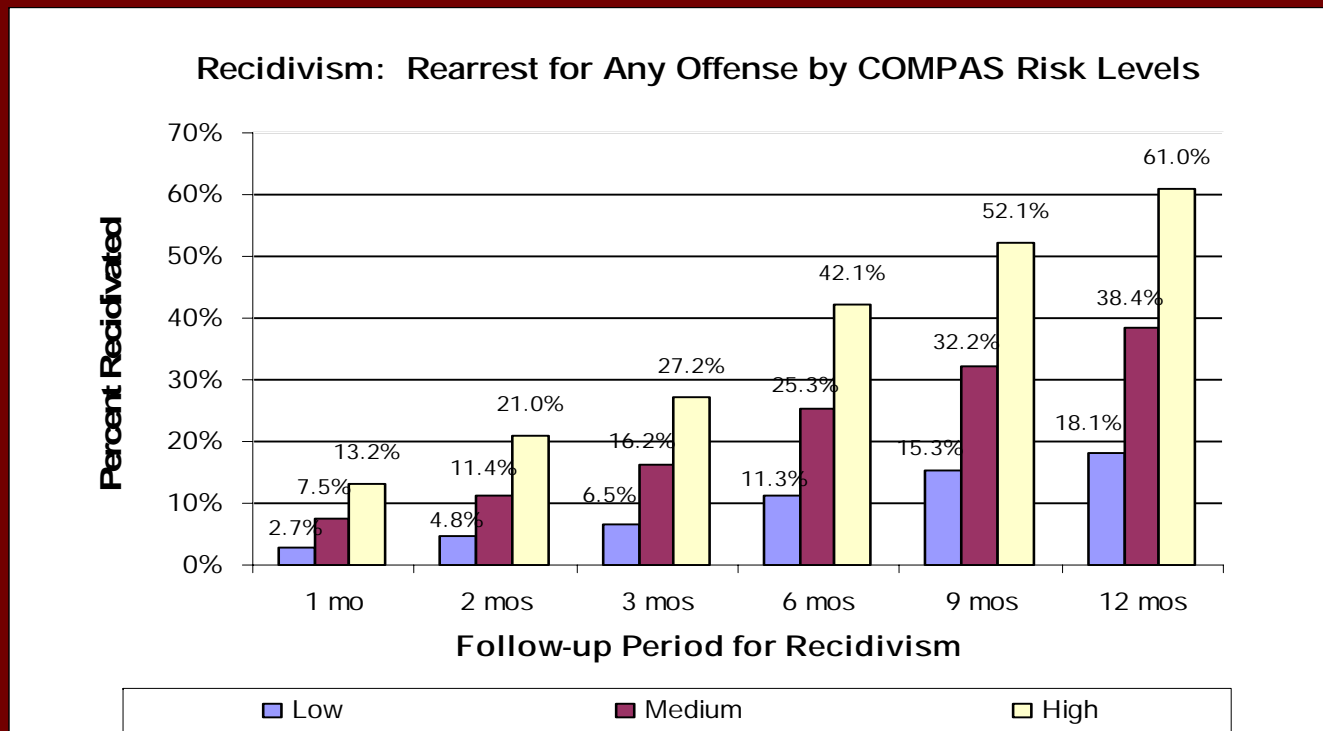
# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Data – Sample Size

- Booking and release datasets were used to create a recidivism file of all offenders released in 2009.

- The records in this recidivism file were matched with records from COMPAS data (n=5,575).

- Outcomes for each of the 3 risk measures (recidivism, violence, and FTA) were examined across 6 follow-up periods:   1 mo., 2 mos., 3 mos., 6 mos., 9 mos., and 12 mos.

- To ensure that offenders in each grouping had the same length of time post release to fail or succeed, the number of days from release to the last possible follow-up date (June 22, 2010) had to be equal or greater than the follow-up period.

- The samples consisted of 5,575 in the 1 mo., 2 mos., and 3 mos. follow-up periods; a sample of 5,264 for the 6 mos. follow-up period; a sample of 3,993 in the 9 mos. follow-up period; and a sample of 2,518 in the 12 mos. follow-up period.
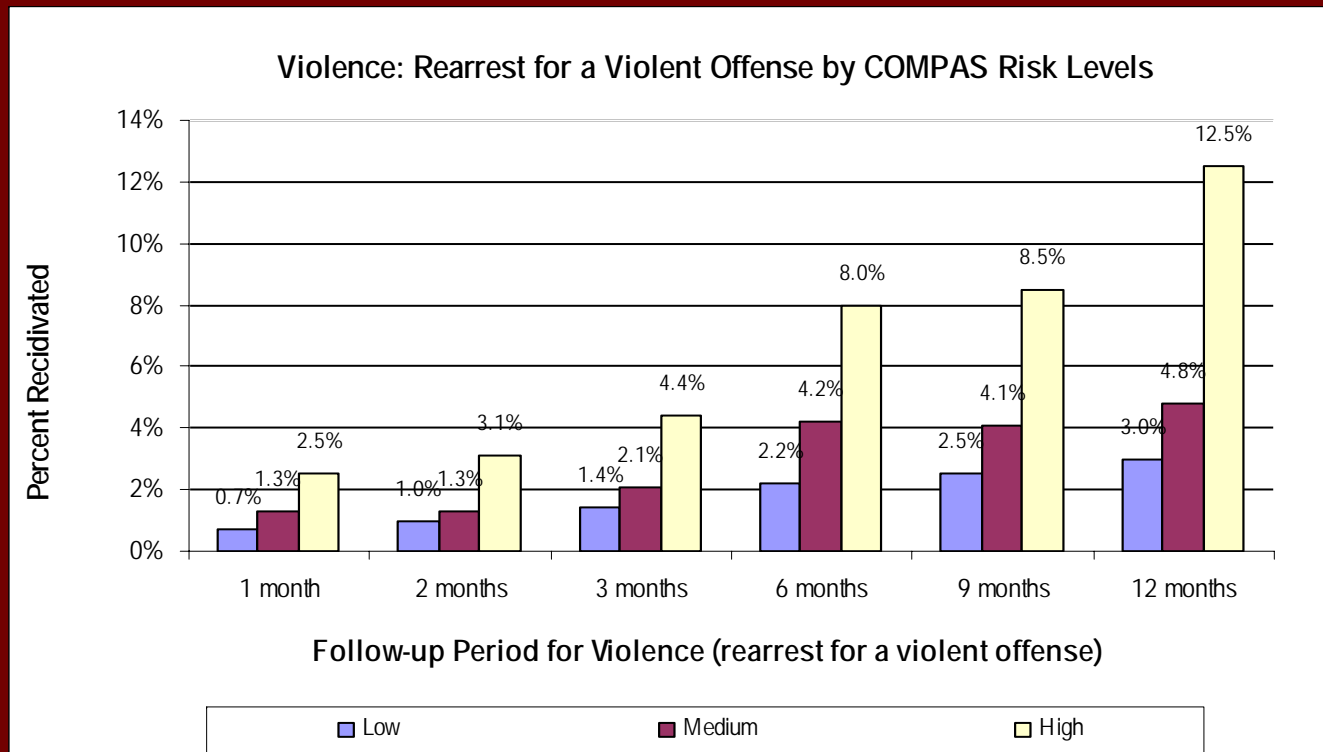
# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Outcomes: Recidivism and Risk Level

- Overall, regardless of the length of the follow-up period post release, the data consistently demonstrate that offenders assessed by COMPAS as having a high risk of recidivism did recidivate at higher levels than offenders assessed as medium and low risk.

- As the risk level identified by the COMPAS instrument increased, the actual occurrences of recidivism increased, regardless of the offender's <u>gender, age, race/ethnicity, offense type</u> within each of the 6 follow-up periods.

**Recidivism: Rearrest for Any Offense by COMPAS Risk Levels**

| Follow-up Period for Recidivism | Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 mo | 2.7% | 7.5% | 13.2% |
| 2 mos | 4.8% | 11.4% | 21.0% |
| 3 mos | 6.5% | 16.2% | 27.2% |
| 6 mos | 11.3% | 25.3% | 42.1% |
| 9 mos | 15.3% | 32.2% | 52.1% |
| 12 mos | 18.1% | 38.4% | 61.0% |

Percent Recidivated

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Violence

- Overall, regardless of the length of the follow-up period post release, the data consistently demonstrate that offenders assessed by COMPAS as having a high risk of violence post release were rearrested more often than offenders assessed as low or medium risk for violence.

- The ability of COMPAS to predict future violence improved as the follow-up period lengthened.



Violence: Rearrest for a Violent Offense by COMPAS Risk Levels

# Validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment
## Failure to Appear (FTA)

- In the 1, 2, and 9 mos. follow-up periods, offenders assessed as having a high likelihood of failing to appear for a court hearing, did have higher levels of FTA compared to those assessed as low and medium.

- In the other follow-up periods, offenders assessed as having a medium risk for FTA failed to appear for court at <u>slightly</u> higher levels.



**Offenders Who Failed to Appear (FTA) by COMPAS Risk Levels**

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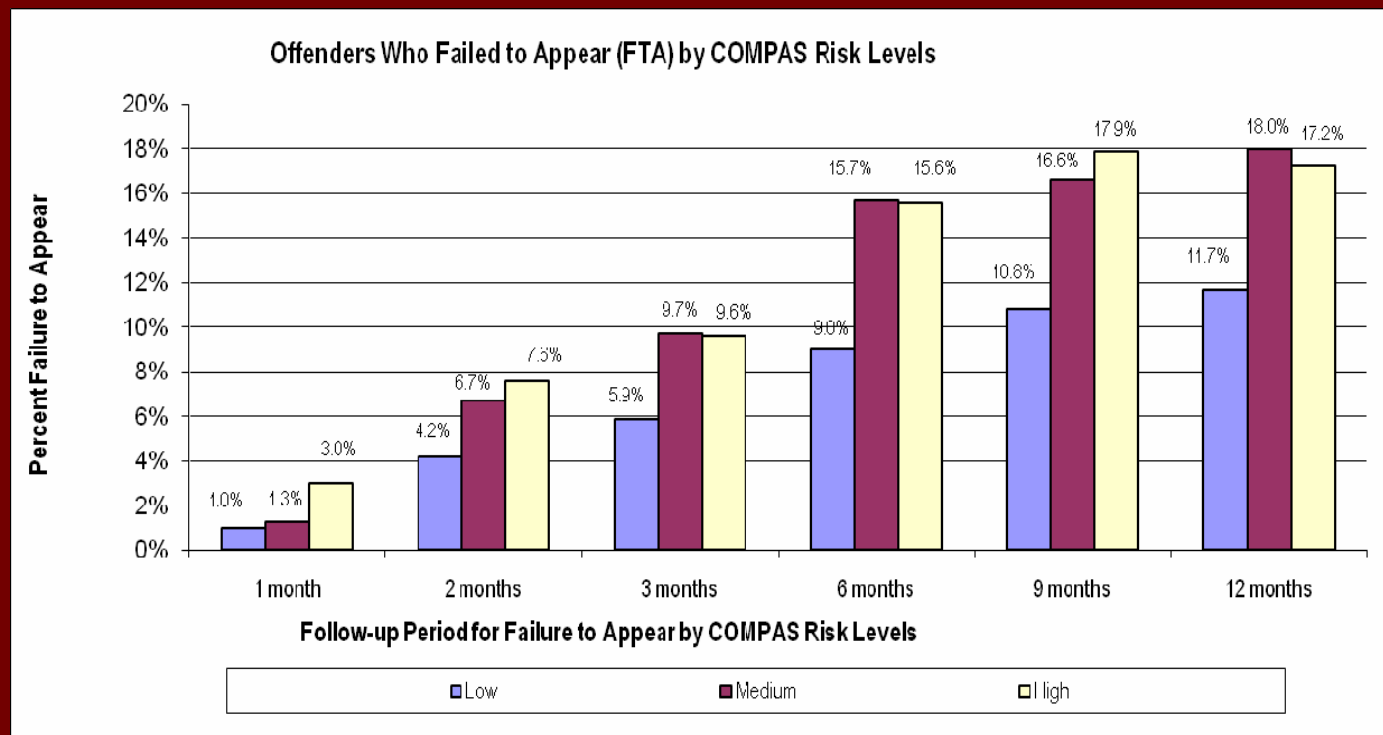
# COMPAS Validation - Conclusions

- This validation of the COMPAS Risk Assessment Classification system currently being utilized by BSO has high levels of accuracy in predicting risk—the predictive accuracy is most consistent when assessing recidivism and violence.

- The empirical support for it's accuracy is present across all six follow-up periods (varying lengths of time) with the exception of a FTA.

- There is support for the appropriateness and accuracy of the individual scores that comprise the risk levels of low, medium, and high across varying follow-up periods. As the individual scored increased from 1 to 10, the actual occurrences of failure increased.

- There is support for the appropriateness of the thresholds that distinguish low level risk from medium level risk, and medium level risk from high level risk for recidivism, violence, and FTA across varying periods of follow up.