

Spring 2015 Juvenile Justice Vision 20/20 Training Event

“Building Blocks for Effective Case Management”

Session 1

Use of Structured Risk/Need Assessments to Improve Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders

Thursday, June 4, 2015, 9:00am-12:00pm

Presented By: *Dr. Sarah Desmarais, Assistant Professor of Psychology, North Carolina State University*



Dr. Sarah L. Desmarais is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at North Carolina State University. She completed her graduate training in forensic psychology at Simon Fraser University, and postdoctoral fellowships in public health and psychology at the University of British Columbia. Prior to coming to North Carolina State University, she was an Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida jointly appointed in the departments of Mental Health Law & Policy and Community & Family Health. Dr. Desmarais works on issues at the nexus of the behavioral health and criminal justice systems. She has more than 50 peer-reviewed publications on topics including risk assessment, mental illness, substance use, and violence. Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Florida’s Department of Children and Families, and the Bristol Meyers Squibb Foundation, her current research is focused on the development, implementation and evaluation of evidence-based practices for the prevention of

criminal justice involvement. Dr. Desmarais is co-author of the Short-Term Assessment of Risk and Treatability (START) and the Short-Term Assessment of Risk and Treatability: Adolescent Version (START:AV), structured professional guides for assessing and managing risks associated with behavioral health problems to assist with treatment planning, decisions regarding supervision, and matching to appropriate interventions. She has contributed to the development of related resources including the START Outcome Scale (SOS), the START User Feedback Survey, and the START Instructors’ Guide and Workbook. Dr. Desmarais trains and consults with mental health and criminal justice professionals worldwide on the implementation of START, START:AV, and other risk assessment approaches.

Presentation Overview

The application of risk/need assessments in juvenile correctional facilities and programs has increased dramatically in recent years. There are many, diverse approaches available, and the use of structured risk/need assessments has become a part of routine practice with juvenile offenders in diverse settings. However, there is limited guidance regarding how to select a specific risk/need assessment instrument and how to use risk/need assessments to improve outcomes. The presentation will first provide an introduction to and overview of risk/need assessment, describing the past, present, and future of science and practice. Second, the presentation will review a series of questions that can be used to guide the selection of a specific risk/need assessment approach from among the validated instruments available, including considerations related to the level of evidence, setting, youth characteristics, and resources. Third, and most importantly, the presentation will discuss how to implement structured risk/need assessments to achieve the ultimate goal of improving outcomes among juvenile offenders. Discussion will focus on translating the findings of risk/need assessments into strategies for both reducing risk and improving outcomes for juvenile offenders in diverse settings and situations.