

Pre-Dispositional Risk Assessment

The Right Tool for the Situation

Imagine you are a parent whose child comes to you with cold symptoms. You must decide whether to let the cold run its course or intervene with a natural or medical therapy. One tool you may use to help you determine your course of action is a thermometer. If your child has a high temperature, you may decide that the situation is more urgent, warranting a trip to the doctor for further diagnosis and treatment. On the other hand, if your child's temperature is within a lower or normal range, you may choose to let the cold run its course and let your child recuperate at home.

Using the PDRA in Juvenile Justice

In a similar way, the Pre-Dispositional Risk Assessment (PDRA) acts as a tool to assist in making the best decision for each youth, based on his/her level of risk. The PDRA is an assessment instrument that helps juvenile justice systems identify the system-involved youth on whom they should focus. The tool helps to classify those youth who are most likely to be involved in future adjudications, allowing agencies to know how intensively to intervene, or what, if any, intervention is necessary—the same way a thermometer helps you decide how best to help a child who has come down with a cold.





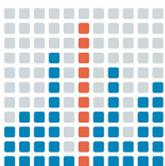
How Does the PDRA Work?

To identify youth most likely to be involved in future offending, the PDRA classifies youth into groups (e.g., low, medium, or high risk) based on a set of characteristics, or risk factors, that have a statistical relationship with future adjudication. Youth with higher risk scores are at higher risk of re-adjudication, while youth classified as medium risk should have lower re-adjudication rates, and youth classified as low risk should have the lowest rates of re-adjudication.

Why Does the PDRA Help?

The PDRA helps Georgia prevent future juvenile offending by allocating its juvenile justice resources to where they can be most effective. It can guide positive interventions toward youth most likely to be re-adjudicated, and helps avoid over-serving youth who are unlikely to ever be adjudicated again.

Research has demonstrated that structured decisions lead to better outcomes than those based on worker judgment alone. Individual decision makers still maintain discretion to use professional judgment and consider the uniqueness of each individual youth. Risk assessments, such as the PDRA, are a core practice to promote safer communities and more successful youth.



For more information, please contact research@nccdglobal.org; visit our website, www.nccdglobal.org; or call (800) 306-6223.