

New York State Division of Probation
and Correctional Alternatives
Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument
YASI



In New York State, approximately 40,000 new juvenile cases are handled annually by local probation departments. A comprehensive assessment protocol is an essential first step toward achieving the goals of public safety, youth accountability, and competency development. Systematic assessment increases the outcome predictability while supporting professional judgment, and assists in pinpointing “targets” for service, thereby augmenting the effectiveness of case management.

The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) Project* brings together good probation practice with developments in research regarding assessment, case planning, and effective intervention. The YASI tool was initially developed, field-tested, and validated in Washington State based upon empirical research, and has been customized and enhanced to meet the needs of New York State, including the addition of case planning tools to guide the user in the development of case plans that target the identified criminogenic need areas. As of August 2007, YASI is being implemented in 54 of the 58 jurisdictions in New York State. By the end of 2007, it is expected that a Long Term Validation Study of YASI will be completed by Orbis Partners with the assistance of DCJS.

Screening, Assessment, and Case Planning: the YASI tool has two assessment components: a pre-screen to identify risk, and a full assessment to identify risk, criminogenic need areas and protective factors. Each item on the tool offers several response options, allowing for narrative description of risk, need, and protective factors being assessed, and more detailed and insightful case profiling of the results of the assessment. Training for YASI users includes interview material to guide the screening, assessment, case planning, and reassessment functionalities. The YASI provides a common language for discussing cases and communicating with other service agencies, and offers objective criteria for assigning appropriate services.

Software features include the YASI Pre Screen to assess risk levels and triage cases, and the Full Assessment, which offers an opportunity to readily gather and synthesize multiple pieces of assessment information through a “roll-up” function, providing a profile of the youth that can be easily understood and shared. The YASI software also includes an automated case planning protocol, a reassessment function, and a number of quick report options to aggregate local data. The case planning software provide tools to assist probation officers to ■connect-the-dots■ from assessment to case planning, and to record specific service interventions and case outcomes, assisting probation with information management, program evaluation, and identification of service gaps.

Investigations and Report Preparation: the Pre-dispositional Investigation and Reports function component of the software was made available in November 2004. It allows probation officers to transfer the risk, need, and protective factor assessment information into a draft narrative report. Probation officers then customize and individualize the report to meet the needs of the court. This feature provides for many new efficiencies in paperwork, standardizes the format and comprehensiveness of reports, and ensures that content is consistent with the research in terms of risk and protective factors.

Detention: A new detention screen is available under a pilot project and has been offered to all probation and detention administrators.

Training: Initial (assessment) and Follow-up (case planning) Training is required for all YASI users, and specialized training is provided to supervisors. Additional training opportunities have been provided in Advanced Case Planning and Training for Trainers, as well as periodic Director Data Workshops.

Software Development: current work in the area of software includes development of a YASI web-based version and integration of the web-based version with the web-based Caseload Explorer case management system for probation. The new web-based version will include a reworked mental health section that separates out mental health concerns from items related to violence and aggression, and a new domain focused specifically on violence and aggression.

For further information, contact:

Patti Donohue, Community Corrections Representative II at 518-485-5158 or Patricia.Donohue@DPCA.state.ny.us or
Norma Tyler, Community Corrections Representative III at 518-485-5153 or Norma.Tyler@DPCA.state.ny.us .

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