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Opening Slide – *Assessment for Successful Reentry: Christopher J. Sullivan, PhD.*

My name is Chris Sullivan. I am at the University of Cincinnati and have recently been doing a lot of work with risk and needs assessment. And so, some of the points I'll make today really come out of a lot of that work and then kind of taking a step back and thinking a bit about it.

So, we finished this study just last year on behalf, or it was funded by OJJDP. And the idea was to really get a sense of not only some of the work that's done to look at the associations between an assessment score and a risk level what have you, and then a recidivism outcome, but get a sense of how that information's really working, how it's being implemented in the field.

And as someone who hasn't necessarily been totally involved in developing these tools as much as looking at how they're utilized and what that means for justice involved populations, what that means for individuals who are trying to work effectively with those in this case who might be returning to the community in re-entry settings. And so that's the origins of this. So again, the idea in some sense is to think a little bit, and I do come at this as a researcher, but by the same token, I think when we start looking at research that's done in this area, we really are talking about averages, we're talking about groupings and maybe not so much thinking about individuals in context, and then what that means as far as effectively actually working with them.

(Slide 2 – *Evolution of Risk/Needs Assessment: First Generation is Unstructured Professional Judgement, Second Generation is Use of Static – Criminal History-Driven Actuarial Assessment, Third Generation is Integration of Dynamic Factors, Fourth Generation is Use in Case Management and Treatment*) (1:48)

So, if we think about where we are with risk and needs assessment, this gives you a quick overview of the evolution. This is out there and in lots of different places, in lots of different formats, but ideally, we are at this fourth stage now. We're not only are we making decisions and looking at the information in front of us from the standpoint of risk management as a sole focus, but we're really thinking a little bit more about how do we work with an individual case? How do we effectively serve those needs? Not only to reduce recidivism, although that's obviously going to be an important objective, But really think more holistically and think about that in treatment. I would actually add there too, also to not look at this as a one-off process, but look at this as an ongoing check-in, in terms of growth, in terms of change that might be happening in whatever domains we're thinking about from the standpoint of assessment. So ideally, we're at this fourth generation. However, it's really easy to backslide into some of these earlier ones.

(Slide 3 – *Risk/Needs Assessment in Theory: Administer assessment to gather information > Results inform supervision level and areas for intervention > Assign appropriate disposition, supervision, and treatment > Criminogenic needs targeted effectively > Risk of recidivism decreases*) (2:58)

And ideally, this is the process that we would see in theory from the standpoint of how risk and needs assessment works. We gather information in an initial interview, we might look at records, we might talk to collateral so, I do a lot of work with juveniles, and so, might be a matter of talking with individuals or families, maybe even the person completing the assessment might reach out to someone at school. And that should ideally result in some decision-making, then in turn creates an environment hopefully for success where appropriate decisions are made about supervision levels, not sort of over,

monitoring, getting individuals into the right services, right treatment as needed. And then, ideally from the standpoint of the language, the factors, the risks or the needs that may be driving possibilities of recidivism are reduced. And so that in a nutshell is going to be theoretically what we want to do.

(Slide 4 – *The Use of Risk/Needs Assessment: What We Know*) (4:06)

And what we know a lot about in terms of the research, is what I sort of look at is almost this doughnut or this sort of circle, where we know a lot about the assessment upfront, we might know about a score, we might know about a level, and then we see as some association with recidivism, and that's usually how we're looking at and studying this. This is the lion's share of the research that's out there on risk and needs assessment of justice involved populations by far. And we typically see that this is going to perform better than basic clinical judgment or statistically it's going to perform better than, flipping a coin. And so those relationships are moderate in size and enough to spur on the idea. And obviously the fact that I'm here as someone who's going to help with the risk assessment part of the project, is suggests that this is ubiquitous. I mean, it's everywhere. This is happening in the field.

So, I think that this is what we know predominantly, we know a little bit few other things, but nevertheless the main body of information that we have to work with when we start talking about this in-justice populations, in-justice settings is going to be based on, where do we start in terms of the assessment? And then where does the case end up in terms of coming back into the system, usually from a record standpoint?

(Slide 5 – *Avoiding Tilted Assessment Use: Simpler to focus on assigning and risk management, Sustainable success in reentry is more than managing risk, Must focus on Decision-making and usage*) (5:29)

But we can very easily, as I mentioned that generational, evolution, we can very easily backslide, to making this all about risk management. And so, I refer this as tilted assessment use. So, it's still difficult. It's still not foolproof, but nevertheless, it's going to be a lot easier to focus heavily on risk, assigning it, managing it. But I think as we all know, sustainable success in reentry is but a lot more things than managing risks, helping individuals get and realize what they want to do, and maybe not just directing them towards a one size fits all programs or on the employment side obviously understanding that there's a lot of scaffolding that might go into that. There's also a sort of even the interpersonal networking, that's going to play a role. So, sustainable success in reentry is going to be about a lot more than simply managing risk. And what that means is that we have to focus on an awful lot on decision-making and usage.

(Slide 6 – The *Use of Risk/Needs Assessment: What Drives Success*) (6:34)

So, we start looking back at this donut, this piece in here is really what we need to fill in an awful lot and think a lot about in the day to day when we're using this information in order to drive decisions about cases. And there's an awful lot of things that I would argue that we need to be mindful of when we're thinking about that center of this process.

(Slide 7 – *Decision-Making and Usage List: Implementation Fidelity, Supervision Decisions, Case Management, Resource Needs and Allocation, Needs-Program Matching, Assessing Change*) (07:04)

This is just a list of a few matter of fact as I was sitting there, one of the things that struck me especially in a reentry context is, who gets access to the particular information that's coming out of an

assessment? And then how is it sort of delivered? And when is it delivered even? And whether or not it's useful. So, I would add that to this list as well. But its things like implementation fidelity, how actually is the tool being administered and what processes are used. And we go down the list, but ultimately, we need to think about this both from the standpoint of the individual who's going to be affected by the decisions that are made based on the assessment, the people around them and what that means in terms of supporting their re-entry process and their re-entry success. And then also I would argue organizationally, so it needs to be a multilevel, multifaceted, look at that decision making and usage because that also is going to be important.

One of the things that we've seen in our work is that those folks in the field might have information on a particular domain and identify their population of youth in this case has a particular need, but if the services don't exist in that area or if they're difficult to access for the population well, that sort of almost renders the information that's been gathered somewhat moot in that case. And so being aware and being able to use this organizationally as well, to identify what are the patterns that we're seeing in terms of need in the individuals we're serving. So, we can see, and there's a whole bunch of other things that we need to add to just managing risk or looking at risk, and then recidivism outcomes if we're going to focus a bit more holistically on individuals in context and thinking about assessment.

(Slide 8 – *Mapping Needs to Inform Response Bar Graph*) (8:57)

And so just to give you an example here, these are three cases from a residential assessment that I pull them out just as a case study and they all have the same risk score. And so, if you looked at them statistically, these cases would all just get bunched together.

And we wouldn't really necessarily be able to divide and really think too much about how do we actually map that information to that individual case in terms of what they need. We can leave aside the juvenile justice history for a second because that's going to be more of a static thing. If we look across here, we can basically see that there's some areas where so if we look at pro social skills and that domain, these three cases are very similar. However, if we look at other domains this is an example there's values, beliefs and attitudes, and that a lot of times is going to drive maybe some of the cognitive behavioral therapy that might happen in working with a particular cases.

And we can see there that there's variation and so we wouldn't necessarily want to have a one size fits all approach coming out of this process. We can also see in terms of the family and living arrangements that actually, two of the cases don't really have too much in terms of what's showing up on this risk assessment, but one does. So, we'd really have to be mindful of the individual in this case youth, as they're returning to their community, to their family and acknowledging and understanding maybe what each individual youth is facing and developing a plan that's going to respond effectively to that. And also, then seeing that plan through understanding again, where these things might fluctuate. So, this is basically a snapshot in time. If we reassess in six months or a year, how are these different domains, what's changing and fluctuating over time, such that we can see maybe that there has been some progress in addressing that particular area, or maybe there's actually been, some problems have come up in terms of with family, as youths' transition back to the community and therefore that needs to be addressed going forward.

(Slide 9 – *Case Level Decisions in Reentry: How to approach supervision, Rewarding success, Sanctioning Violations, Identifying treatment and service needs, Ensuring programming success, Understanding individual in context, Assessing and responding to change*) (11:28)

And so, we think about the case level decisions in re-entry, they would have to happen coming out of this. Most of these, I would argue are not necessarily solely about getting some overall risk score. They're really about taking a broader view of the information that's gathered from this process. And then thinking about it in a way that's really contextualized. So, if we think about ensuring programming success, there's going to be something maybe an aspect of that, that is about the individual in that program and what their motivation is, but also might be the fit between them and that program as well that they're going to. Treatment and service needs. Obviously in those cases, there may be some similarities across cases, but there also may be some individualized factors that need to be really dealt with in a pretty precise way, when we start thinking about individuals in their family relationships, their social networks or the degree to which maybe they don't have much in the way of network support that would help them in certain aspects of re-entry. So, all of those things in ensuring successful re-entry should be part of the equation.

And assessing and responding to change as I mentioned especially in re-entry where, essentially people are making pretty significant jumps in environments, and there's going to be change that comes with that. And if we're only assessing on the way out of a facility and then expecting that information to carry through in case planning and working with that individual towards successful re-entry over a longer period of time, in a way that's going to be effective, it's unlikely to occur.

(Slide 10 – *Assessment for Successful Reentry: Mark of quality in assessment is improved decisions and outcomes; Focus on linkage between assessment and impacted decisions and actions; Individual, social and economic environment adjustment to reentry process*) (13:28)

And so, we think about assessment for successful re-entry, I would argue that the mark of quality and assessment is in the improved decisions and outcomes. So, a lot of the work that we have, which I would argue is more about statistically and from a research basis establishing that there is some relationship between the information that goes in, so an input and then an output which seemingly we could define in other ways as well.

I think we definitely need to at least shift focus so, there's an equal amount of attention on the decisions that are made and then how those map to outcomes. And with that, there's a need to focus on how the information from the assessment is actually linked to decision-making. Is it being used effectively? Are we utilizing the particular pieces of information that we should be getting theoretically, in this process at this stage of the process of risk and needs assessment? Are we getting the information that's needed to impact decisions effectively, and then in turn, improve outcomes and not just outcomes in terms of system involvement, but outcomes in other areas as well such as employment or education? If, that's an identified need.

And so with that we really need to, we think about assessment, see the individual sort of not just as a risk score or in a particular level of need, but we really need to see a bit more broadly around how that information at the surface level actually connects to what their reentry experience is going to look like? What are the challenges that they're likely to face? What is the sort of social and economic environment that they're returning to? And what does that mean for their individual success? How is their case being managed in the community in terms of justice supervision? And then what does that mean in terms of how those pieces interact? And what the likelihood of their successes? And so, we need to think about that, and then we also need to think that this is not a real static process, such that we get one score and then that can carry through in terms of informing success in reentry.

We need to think about it as an ongoing process, that's going to continue as they adjust to the re-entry process as they obtain a different programming, as they might be involved in particular jobs, along their sort of pathway out of the system. Thank you.