






**SAMHSA's GAINS Center Releases Trauma-Informed Treatment Courts Criminal Justice Learning Collaborative—Apply Today!**



# Integrating Trauma-Informed Principles and Practices in Treatment Courts

**Criminal Justice Learning Collaborative**

 **Applications due:**  
**December 6, 2024**



The banner has a grey background with a white wavy pattern at the bottom. The SAMHSA's GAINS CENTER logo is in the top right. The title is in large, bold, dark blue letters. Below the title is a horizontal line. Under the line, the text 'Criminal Justice Learning Collaborative' is in bold. Below that, a calendar icon is followed by the text 'Applications due: December 6, 2024'. On the right side, there are two overlapping speech bubbles, one light blue and one dark blue.

*Applications due: December 6, 2024*

SAMHSA's GAINS Center invites jurisdictions interested in advancing trauma-informed policies and practices in adult treatment court programs to apply to join the *Integrating Trauma-Informed Principles and Practices in Treatment Courts Learning Collaborative*.

**Why It Matters:** This Learning Collaborative aims to foster a more effective, trauma-informed approach within treatment courts to improve participant and program outcomes.

**Learning Collaborative Process:** Selected teams will develop strategic plans to implement trauma-informed policies and practices within treatment courts, with guidance from experts and peer collaboration.

**Application Information:**

1. **Submit your application by December 6, 2024:** Complete the Microsoft Forms application and list key partners.
2. **Notification:** All applicants will be informed by January 12, 2025.

[Learn More and Apply](#)

## New Insights Into Risk Assessments Revealed in Research Brief and Podcast



A new systematic review finds that risk assessments do not increase racial disparities in criminal legal decisions—and in some cases, they may even help reduce them. Learn more in a new research brief and podcast.

**Why It Matters:** This research provides essential insights for policymakers and practitioners considering using risk assessments to reduce disparities and

improve fairness in criminal legal decision-making.

## Key Research Findings:

- Most evidence indicates risk assessments do not result in harsher treatment for individuals with minoritized racial and ethnic identities.
- More than one third of articles in this systematic review found that risk assessments helped decrease pre-existing racial and ethnic disparities in criminal legal decisions.
- Most of the included articles focused on pretrial-related outcomes and brief pretrial risk assessments.

## BRINGING DATA TO THE DEBATE ON RISK ASSESSMENTS

NOVEMBER 2024

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Current evidence overall signals that risk assessments are not resulting in harsher treatment for individuals with minoritized racial and ethnic identities.
- ▶ More than one third of articles in this systematic review found that risk assessments helped decrease pre-existing racial and ethnic disparities in legal decision making.
- ▶ Most of the included articles focused on pretrial-related outcomes and a narrow type of risk assessment (e.g., brief pretrial risk screening tools).
- ▶ Overall, most studies tended to be methodologically weak. More gold-standard (i.e., pre-post comparison) studies are needed.

### INTRODUCTION

Risk assessment instruments estimate the likelihood of legal outcomes (namely recidivism; failure to appear in court is also included in the case of pretrial tools) in the adult and juvenile legal systems. They include brief risk screening tools and comprehensive risk needs assessments measuring static and/or changeable risk factors. These tools rate people across different criteria such as number of prior convictions or impulsivity.<sup>1,2</sup>

The heightened awareness of structural inequities throughout the United States legal system has led to an influx of criticism of risk assessment instruments. Despite the anticipated benefits of risk assessments,<sup>3,4</sup> critics highlight that they incorporate risk factors (e.g., criminal history items) that reflect relative disadvantage and compound structural racism carried over from earlier legal contacts.<sup>5,6</sup> As a result, critics argue that the use of risk assessments will disproportionately lead to harsher legal outcomes for individuals of color (disparate impact). Disparate impact would occur if people of color obtained higher scores, on average, and

they received harsher penalties (e.g., pretrial detention versus release) from the system as a result.<sup>7</sup>

A prior systematic review on the disparate impact of risk assessment instruments found insufficient evidence at the time to offer clear conclusions.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the Law & Psychiatry Program at the UMass Chan Medical School updated this systematic review to examine the disparate impact of risk assessments by race and ethnicity across diverse legal decision points.<sup>10</sup>

### METHODOLOGY

Our updated systematic review synthesized available articles that investigated the real-world impact of juvenile and adult risk assessments on racial/ethnic disparities in legal decision making. We examined published and unpublished literature available between January 2000 and July 2023. Three primary inclusion criteria guided our search of articles:

- ▶ Used a population from a legal setting.
- ▶ Examined disparate impact of a risk assessment on a legal outcome.

BRINGING DATA TO THE DEBATE ON RISK ASSESSMENTS

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## Resources to Enhance Your Understanding:

- **Research Brief:** This brief provides context, methodology, and actionable recommendations for criminal legal system practitioners and researchers.
- **Data Points Podcast Episode:** Drs. Gina Vincent and Spencer Lawson from the [Law & Psychiatry Program](#) at UMass Chan Medical School discuss how validated risk assessments when appropriately implemented and used fairly, can guide more equitable criminal legal decisions. They share what is needed to advance research in this field.

Download the Brief

Listen to the Episode

## Fresh Findings

# FRESH FINDINGS



Policy Research staff have published new articles advancing the fields of critical consciousness among Black youth, youth well-being, and online mental health resources.

**[Comparing the Costs and Benefits of Activism for Girls with Different Sexual Orientations and Racial and Ethnic Identities](#)**: Girls ages 15–23 report more benefits (e.g., pride, empowerment) than costs (e.g., stress, burnout) associated with activism, though girls with minoritized identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation) experience greater costs than those with fewer minoritized identities.

**[Racism and Mental Health: The Moderating Role of Critical Consciousness for Black Adolescents](#)**: Critical reflection and action can serve as a coping strategy for Black adolescents to protect against the negative mental health impacts of racism.

**[What About Your Friends? Friendship Networks and Mental Health in Critical Consciousness](#)**: Adolescent mental health is influenced by the critical consciousness (acting toward justice for all) of friends: higher friend-group consciousness boosts psychological well-being, while mismatches in critical consciousness increase distress.

**[Exploring Digital Affordances in Online Mental Health Resources: A Scoping Review of Methodologies and Populations](#)**: Online mental health resources (e.g., social media, web-based therapies) incorporate tools such as social sharing, anonymity, and personalization to enhance user experience and encourage use.

## Upcoming Webinars

**[HHRC: Loneliness Among Homeless and Formerly Homeless Individuals](#)**

December 3, 2024, 3:00–4:30 p.m. ET

This webinar will feature speakers who are experts on the topic of loneliness and will provide insight into its intersection with the experience of homelessness.

## **GAINS: Improving Behavioral Health Care for Older Adults in the Criminal Justice System**

*December 4, 2024, 2:30–4:00 p.m. ET*

This webinar will explore the current need for improved behavioral health strategies for aging adults and critical partnerships between correctional facilities and state- or community-based agencies.

## **GAINS: Screenings and Assessments for Substance Use Disorders to Support Successful Reentry**

*December 17, 2024, 1:30–3:00 p.m. ET*

This webinar will review a range of standardized and validated screening and assessment instruments for detecting substance use disorders among justice-involved individuals.

## **Policy Research at an Event Near You**

Policy Research Near You: **December**



### **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES MOMENTUM CONFERENCE**



**December 4–6 | Norman, Oklahoma**

*Chanson Noether, MA*

Using the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) as a Tool to Promote Cross-System Collaboration and Behavioral Health Innovation

## **Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Momentum Conference**

*December 4–6, 2024, Norman, Oklahoma*

Join Vice President Chanson Noether, MA, at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Momentum Conference. His presentation, "Using

The Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) as a Tool to Promote Cross-System Collaboration and Behavioral Health Innovation," will take place on December 5 from 10:50–11:50 a.m. CT.

## Recent Stories From the Policy Research Blog

Blog

Essential Learnings From the GAINS Center Webinar on Training Treatment Court Teams to Navigate Harm Reduction in Drug Courts



Aaron Arnold, JD



Addressing Hoarding Disorder Among People Who Have Experienced Homelessness: HHRC Webinar Insights



Utilizing Trauma-Informed Approaches to Support Transition-Age Youth (TAY) in the Criminal Justice System Top Takeaways

BLOG



Keith Grimes, PhD, MS



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