

Practitioner Perceptions of the Use and Utility of Pretrial Risk Assessment: Focus Group Analysis¹

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PRETRIAL RISK ASSESSMENTS are increasingly popular tools used to inform release decisions during the pretrial process. There are three main pretrial release outcomes, decided by a judge, magistrate, or similar bond release authority: detention without bond, financial release, or release on nonfinancial conditions (Martinez, Petersen, & Omori, 2020). Pretrial risk assessment tools are designed to shed light on the potential risk that a released defendant will fail to appear to a scheduled court date and/or commit a new offense while released on bond—through the consideration of factors that have been empirically related to an increased likelihood of such outcomes (Bechtel, Holsinger, Lowenkamp, & Warren, 2017). Commonly used pretrial risk assessment tools employ an actuarial approach when assessing these risks, combining the weighted values of the employed risk factors into a total score that is then cross-referenced with a table describing outcome

rates/probabilities (Desmarais, Zottola, Duhart Clarke, & Lowder, 2020). Given that a central rationale for using pretrial risk assessment tools is to improve decision-making in the criminal justice system, the actuarial approach is believed to provide objectivity to pretrial release decisions (Bechtel et al., 2017; Desmarais & Lowder, 2019).

There is an increasing amount of literature examining the predictive validity of pretrial risk assessment tools (e.g., Cadigan, Johnson, & Lowenkamp, 2012; Lowenkamp, Lemke, & Latessa, 2008; Terranova & Ward, 2018; for a comprehensive review see Desmarais et al., 2020); however, less is known about how these tools are *perceived* to contribute to objective decision-making. Knowing more about how pretrial risk assessments tools are perceived by the practitioners who use them carries important implications for how assessment scores are interpreted and used to inform pretrial decisions (DeMichele et al., 2019; Ferguson, 2002; Latessa & Lovins, 2010). This study sought to fill this gap in the literature by reporting central themes from 14 separate focus groups of judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, pretrial officers, and criminal justice administrators about the pretrial risk assessment tool that they use.

The Pretrial Assessment Process

Pretrial risk assessment tools are used to quantify the probability of a defendant being arrested or failing to appear to a scheduled court setting while released on bond (Desmarais & Lowder, 2019). Common implementation protocol for such instruments identifies pretrial services officers as those responsible for administering and scoring the assessment (Mamalian, 2011). Pretrial officers will also review the defendant's official criminal/court records, as well as contacting their employer(s), landlord, and kin to verify information ascertained from the interview process. Once this information is verified and compiled, it may then be calculated into a risk score and corresponding category that is delivered to the other stakeholders involved in the pretrial process (Lowenkamp, Lemke, & Latessa, 2008). At a defendant's bond hearing, prosecutors and defense attorneys may use the risk assessment score to advocate for their respective positions on the pretrial release decision. Prosecutors may use them to advocate for a defendant to remain detained pretrial, while defense attorneys may use them to advocate for their client to be released on bond (DeMichele et al., 2019).

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Perceptions and Implementation

Adhering to the implementation protocol of a validated pretrial risk assessment tool is important to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the risk score (Bechtel et al., 2017). The standardization of such tools ensures that they are implemented and scored the same way by each pretrial officer and jurisdiction (Summers & Willis, 2010). For pretrial officers, this means conducting the assessment interview according to a protocol, as well as interpreting a pretrial defendant's information according to an assessment tool's definitions and scoring of risk indicators. For the other actors in the pretrial process—judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys—this means interpreting and using a calculated risk score with a complete understanding of how it should be interpreted and used to inform decisions.

Adherence to a tool's implementation protocol is important because validated and properly implemented assessment tools can contribute to a greater number of bond release decisions (Desmarais & Lowder, 2019). Perceptions about pretrial risk assessment have been found to impact adherence to a tool's implementation protocol. Negative perceptions can interfere, while positive perceptions can facilitate adherence to a protocol (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Conly, 1989; Latessa & Lovins, 2010; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2004).

Training plays an important role in perceptions of pretrial risk assessment and implementation. Negative perceptions related to pretrial risk assessment have been attributed to a perceived lack of accessible training on its use/functions (Miller & Maloney, 2013). Enhanced training efforts have been found to solicit buy-in and positive perceptions about pretrial risk assessment (Latessa & Lovins, 2010).

Perceptions of an assessment's accuracy and potential bias in predictive performance also play a role in implementation (DeMichele et al., 2019; Terranova, Ward, Slepicka, & Azari, 2020). Judges, prosecutors, and pretrial officers have been described to agree with a release recommendation that is consistent with a pretrial risk score but qualify this with concerns about bias in risk assignment. Across these roles, pretrial officers have been described to assign the highest perceived value to the use of pretrial risk assessment, followed by judges and prosecutors (Terranova et al., 2020). On the other hand, defense attorneys have generally reported less agreement with

the pretrial risk assessment scores and maintain greater concerns about the potential for predictive bias (DeMichele et al., 2019).

Given prior literature that has highlighted the differing beliefs regarding pretrial risk assessment tools, the goal of the current study is to capture and examine perceptions about the role and implementation of pretrial risk assessment tools by those that use them. This study maintains policy implications for effective implementation and training practices. These perceptions are captured using focus groups and defined using a thematic qualitative analysis of the feedback from pretrial officers and supervisors, judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys.

Current Study

Focus groups were conducted across six counties as part of a larger pretrial risk assessment validation in a Midwestern state. The larger study was conducted to assess the predictive performance of a statewide pretrial risk assessment tool, examine how it is implemented, and identify evidence-based recommendations for improving both its construction and implementation.

The statewide pretrial risk assessment tool was first implemented in 2012. It was constructed to assign the risk of either new arrest or an FTA during the pretrial release period. It contains twelve risk factors, five of which are self-report and the remaining seven confirmed with criminal history records. In practice, the self-reported responses of the tool may be overridden by prior records. For example, a pretrial defendant that self-reported not having an alcohol problem but had an extensive history of alcohol-related offending could be scored in the positive for this risk factor. This practice can vary across jurisdictions, with some relying solely on self-reported information and others confirming with records.

The tool's risk score was used to inform a recommendation about pretrial release and supervision conditions. Supervision matrices were used to help determine the level and type of bond supervision that a defendant would be assigned during the pretrial process. All of the participating counties in this study had a supervision matrix that incorporated the pretrial defendant's risk category, but the categories of these matrices vary across jurisdictions. Judges would use this recommendation to inform their release decision but could override the risk score and recommendation according to their professional

discretion. Estimating the frequency of these overrides is beyond the scope of this study, but recommendation overrides were practiced in all jurisdictions participating in the study.

A survey and focus groups were employed to understand how the tool was implemented, as well as perceptions of risk assessment by practitioners and stakeholders. The preliminary survey was used to identify respondents interested in participating in the focus groups, as well as to inform discussion questions. To examine perceptions of the role of pretrial risk assessment, we ask: What is the perception of pretrial risk assessment tools by those that carry out the pretrial process?

Sample

A total of 14 focus groups were conducted between May and June 2018. Focus groups were held with two categories of individuals involved in the pretrial process: a) pretrial officers who conduct risk assessment interviews and investigations, as well as pretrial supervisors, and b) pretrial stakeholders that use risk assessment tools to inform release decisions and bond arguments (e.g., judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other criminal justice administrators). In five of the six counties, one focus group was conducted with pretrial officers and supervisors and another with pretrial stakeholders. In the sixth county, a total of four focus groups were conducted. Participants for each of these four focus groups were defined by role in the pretrial process: a) pretrial officers and supervisors, b) judges, c) prosecutors, and d) defense attorneys. The four focus groups in one county were the result of the large number of interested participants in certain roles in the county. To ensure that all interested participants were afforded the opportunity to express their perceptions related to the statewide tool, role-specific focus groups were conducted accordingly.

Participants were recruited through two methods. The first method was a survey of criminal justice stakeholders that ended with an inquiry into their interest in taking part in a focus group in the future. This survey was distributed via various listservs of state agencies that have direct roles in the pretrial process (i.e., pretrial officers, prosecutors, judges, public defenders) and through chain-referral sampling of those who had completed the survey. If interested, these participants provided an email address, with researchers later inviting them to take part in a focus group discussion. Due to low availability or

nonresponses to these emails, a second strategy was employed—pretrial administrators in each of the participating counties recruited participants through county-wide email listservs. The focus groups were scheduled in one-hour blocks and took place in either courthouse or administrative building conference rooms. During the focus groups, one of the authors served as lead facilitator, one as co-facilitator, and at least one other served as a note taker. The focus groups were audio recorded and followed a semi-structured interview guide.

In total, 109 participants took part in the 14 focus groups. Six of the focus groups were with pretrial officers and supervisors, involving 41 individuals. Eight of the focus groups were with pretrial stakeholders (i.e., judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, jail staff), involving a total of 68 individuals. To ensure confidentiality, demographic information was not collected about the focus group participants. The diversity amongst participants' criminal justice role was useful for soliciting different perspectives. Disagreement across diverse perspectives can encourage participants to reconsider their perspective, enriching the overall findings (Bryman, 2008). Following the conclusion of each focus group, the audio recordings were transcribed and de-identified to further ensure confidentiality of the participants.

Methodology and Analysis

Focus groups garner information about pretrial assessment, making them valuable for examining how they are used throughout the pretrial process (Mamalian, 2011). They are defined as planned discussions about perceptions, feelings, and attitudes amongst a group of interest. (Massey, 2010; Kahan, 2001, Kitzinger, 1994). The goal of these discussions is to generate important insights into a particular topic that would not be available through one-on-one interviews (Kitzinger, 1994).

The initial questions were broad and included how participants felt about the tool in its current state, as well as the perceived utility of the tool. Other questions pertained to perceptions of buy-in for the tool, training, and how—or if—stakeholder's views of the tool would be impacted if certain modifications were made. The interview protocol was followed for all of the focus groups. In some instances, focus group conversations would stray from the protocol; however, such conversations still pertained to the pretrial risk assessment tool in question, and thus were

welcomed by the facilitators.

Each focus group was recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed in NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. Thematic analysis was conducted upon coding each focus group transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendations for conducting thematic analysis, the researchers analyzed each of the focus group transcripts and coded similar comments into nodes. Emergent themes were identified through reviewing each transcription. To address inter-rater reliability between the coders, reliability checks were conducted using a peer debriefing approach (Guba, 1981). The themes were compared by the two leading authors for consistency. Any discrepancies in themes were discussed and clarified amongst the authors. Once identified, the researchers reviewed each of the NVivo coded responses and transcripts to confirm these themes and identify quotations that exemplified each theme.

Results

Five themes emerged from the thematic content analysis, all of which help elucidate the study's main research question: What is the perceived utility of pretrial risk assessment by those who carry out the pretrial process? The themes include: 1) the role of the risk assessment tool; 2) risk override and discretion; 3) informing pretrial supervision and outcome; 4) consideration of other factors, independent of the risk assessment; and 5) training and education for tool.

Theme 1: The Role of the Risk Assessment Tool

The role of the risk assessment tool pertains to perceptions about how these tools are used, specifically when informing the bond release decision. This is especially relevant to the implementation and resulting accuracy of an assessment tool. Negative perceptions of assessment tools can result in pushback about adherence to implementation protocol (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Conly, 1989). Diverting from implementation protocols can ultimately compromise the accuracy of an empirically constructed and validated assessment tool (Latessa & Lovins, 2010).

Feedback from both categories of focus groups indicated that the pretrial risk assessment tool played a role in the arraignment process, but should be used in conjunction with professional discretion. One pretrial officer noted: "I want a tool to be used as a

foundation.... use your professional judgement...it's a starting point, it's an anchor" (pretrial participant: pretrial officer).

Importantly, many of the respondents did not prioritize the tool in their decision-making process. Rather, the risk score and category were one piece of information among many that are considered. A pretrial stakeholder described pretrial risk assessment:

I think the best way to describe it is, from our perspective, it's a piece of information. It's not something that we are heavily relying upon, in making our arguments to the judges because we are still going to have to go back and do the work. (Stakeholder participant: prosecutor)

The pretrial risk assessment score and category are also perceived by stakeholders as being no more or less important than other factors.

Theme 2: Risk Override and Discretion

Another emergent theme from the thematic content analysis pertained to differences in assessed and perceived risk. Judicial override occurs when a resulting release decision differs from the risk-informed release recommendation. These decisions require a balance of professional discretion and the challenge of predicting a pretrial outcome (Goldkamp, 1993).

Based on feedback across all the stakeholder focus groups, the risk assessment score was thought to occasionally differ from one's perceived risk based on professional discretion. This difference was reported to occur due to many factors including but not limited to how the individual interpreting the score would use it, training, what other information was provided about the defendant, and the decision-maker's perception of the defendant. In numerous focus groups, sex offender was identified as an example where the judge would likely override a low risk score and not order release on bond. Prosecutors and defense attorneys that use the pretrial risk assessment score to inform bond arguments also used the tool differently according to the specific case. As one judge describes:

So the [defense attorneys] are always arguing for bond, and the [prosecutors] are all arguing for no bond...And if the [risk assessment tool] is in their favor they argue it, and if it's not in

their favor they disregard it. And not every single argument, but...often, and it's completely aggravating, because... well, I'm not getting any help from the litigants (Stakeholder Participant: magistrate judge).

Since judges used pretrial risk assessment tools along with a variety of other factors, resulting release decisions can vary greatly. As one public defender noted: "The same person could see three different judges and get three different results, based on the [risk assessment tool]" (Stakeholder Participant: public defender). Interestingly, participants perceived this variation in the resulting decision to be negative but still supported accompanying pretrial risk assessment with professional discretion for release decisions.

Theme 3: Supervision/ Outcome of the Risk Score

Supervision/outcome of the risk score refers to the variety of decisions that assessment tools were used to inform. Pretrial risk assessment tools are constructed to assess the risk of new arrest or failing to appear to court (Bechtel et al., 2017). By design, supervision needs are not an outcome included in the predictive performance of pretrial risk assessment tools. This means that little is known about the accuracy of pretrial risk assessment tools when used for bond condition assignment.

Across all roles in carrying out the pretrial process, participants expressed that the pretrial risk score was used to inform decisions about pretrial release and also the conditions of supervision that may be ordered if a defendant is released. Similar to bond release decisions, the role of pretrial risk assessment to inform recommendations and orders of pretrial supervision conditions was perceived to be accompanied by professional discretion. Although the pretrial risk assessment tool was not constructed to directly inform the pretrial supervision decision, the tool was favored by pretrial officers because it was thought to provide tangible information about the pretrial defendant that is useful for supervision purposes. One pretrial officer that supervised pretrial defendants' bond compliance advised:

We use our [risk assessment] scores for supervision, also. I don't think it was created to do that, but, we just use that on the supervision side to say, we think this person is a Category One, so then we set their frequency for testing, or

whatever it is, their check-ins, based on that category. And then case managers have the room to flex that...depending on how they are doing...again, I don't think the [risk assessment] was intended to ever focus on supervision, we just do that because it gives a good baseline on how to supervise somebody. (Pretrial Stakeholder: pretrial supervisor)

A common theme across participants was frustration with the uncertainty of the pretrial outcomes of release and bond condition decisions. Pretrial risk assessment tools were reported to provide valuable information about a pretrial defendant and insight into uncertain pretrial outcomes. One pretrial stakeholder noted:

Once we get our score, it's kind of just like, okay, now it is on me to decide what this guy's going to have to do, so...once we have the score, what do we do with it? What do we recommend, and what conditions are going to make this person more successful? I mean, there is really no research, or anything, that we have saying that...random drug testing isn't going to help this person, but we are just ordering it for everyone, because we don't know. (Pretrial Stakeholder: pretrial supervisor)

Theme 4: Consideration of Other Factors

Participants in all roles emphasized the importance of considering other factors in conjunction with the risk assessment score during the bond release decision. This theme is consistent with findings that reviewing factors beyond the risk score is considered the most effective at informing accurate decisions, because not all risk or protective factors are included in a single assessment (Desmarais & Lowder, 2019; Mamalian, 2011).

In the participating counties, judges were given information from pretrial services about a pretrial defendant's drug history, employment, and prior number of FTAs. This information was commonly reported on a bond report along with recommendations about release and supervision. These items were independent of the risk assessment tool and therefore not included in the resulting risk category. The type of offense (e.g., sex offense, domestic violence) was reported to be a primary consideration for the release

and supervision decision that is not included in the risk assessment score. If a defendant is charged with a high-profile sexual offense and is assessed to be low risk, judges reported often being hesitant to make the decision to release on bond.

Pretrial stakeholders across focus groups described how they incorporate additional information, such as type of charge, into their decision-making process. For example, one judge notes:

From a judicial perspective, in order to maintain a level of consistency, I have to give the same weight to the [risk assessment tool] that I would give on... a SAOC, or sex assault on a child, that's a [low risk]... but I also have to take into consideration the nature of the offense...and the nature of the history, the type of offenses they were charged with, not just plead to, and how recent in time those were. That's something I do independent of the score, because the score doesn't, really, take that into consideration. (Stakeholder Participant: judge, 1st and 2nd Advisement Court)

Charge severity and community ties were additional factors perceived to be critical to stakeholders' decision-making process. One prosecutor succinctly summarized this point stating:

Yeah I think our judges or our players recognize that [the risk assessment category] is just a guideline...Our community values are going to be taken into consideration... high stakes and low stakes crime. (Stakeholder Participant: prosecutor)

The impact of the defendant's release on the local community was another aspect that was reportedly considered. These factors included the impact of pretrial release and supervision decisions on the overall jail capacity, as well as the decrease in bail industry involved cash bonds. As one stakeholder noted:

One observation I have too... is that my contact...my lawyer contact with bail bonds people plummeted since we had the [risk assessment tool]... they use to be around the courts and the courthouse and we haven't seen that nearly as much... (Stakeholder Participant: District Attorney's Office).

Theme 5: Training and Education for Tool

A common theme that emerged from all of the focus group discussions related to training and education. Training about risk assessment has been linked to enhanced buy-in from those that use it, which carries implications for adherence to implementation protocol (Latessa & Lovins, 2010). The respondents overwhelmingly reported that training about pretrial risk assessment was perceived to be important. Formal training for the pretrial risk assessment tool was provided to pretrial officers and supervisors throughout the state on a semi-annual rotation but not to the other judicial stakeholders.

One perceived advantage of the formal training was to ensure consistency in the tool's implementation. It was reported that counties implemented and even scored certain items on the tool differently. For example, one item on the risk tool asked defendants to self-report a problem with substance abuse. As part of the instructional guide, the self-reported response to this question should be relied on. However, some counties allowed their officers to override this item. For example, one pretrial officer noted:

Some people agree, some people disagree, but if you have five DUI convictions, and you say you don't have a problem with alcohol...I think you might be a little...wrong on that. So I mean, we take it...case by case...I mean, we don't do it...sparingly we just...if it shows they have an alcohol problem, even though they say no...we'll override that and say yes. (Pretrial Participant: pretrial officer)

Stakeholders identified that they had not received the formal state-wide training for the tool. Many of the stakeholders supported the idea of going through training about the use of the risk assessment tool if it were more widely available. As one judge notes:

I think one thing that is very important, as I think is very obvious just from the questions I've been being asked, or I've asked, is that [training] needs to be, I think, ongoing. Either annually, or something, or if there is any slight modifications that we continue...because I think if you don't actually understand the instrument, or the theories, and the evidence based theories behind it, it's hard

to have a lot of confidence. (Stakeholder Participant: County Court judge)

Pretrial officers and supervisors, as well as pretrial stakeholders, expressed a perceived need for more education about how the tool is implemented, as well as more education regarding pretrial risk assessment in general. One stakeholder advised:

There needs to be a lot more education, with the whole system, about what risk assessments do, what their purpose is, what their limitations are, what they are effective at, and what they're not effective at. (Stakeholder Participant: pretrial administrator)

Participants across multiple focus groups expressed that expanding the frequency, accessibility, and content of the formal trainings and education could improve the tool's utility for informing pretrial decisions.

Often, the discussion surrounding buy-in for the use of the tool was incorporated into the discussion about training and education. Importantly, participants noted that training alone would not likely increase stakeholder buy-in of the tool. Education regarding the construction and statistics used to create and score the tool would clarify the utility of the risk assessment. The participants perceived this level of transparency about the pretrial risk assessment tool as critical for ongoing support of the use of the tool. As one stakeholder noted, "I really think just understanding why...why these questions were the ones picked, why this works, because I feel like there's just not a lot of faith in the tool as it is. Especially with the other stakeholders" (Pretrial Participant: pretrial officer).

Discussion

The pretrial phase of the criminal justice system can meaningfully impact the post-arrest trajectory for defendants. Research has demonstrated that those who have been released have better outcomes in the disposition of their case than those that stay in jail (Lowenkamp et al., 2013). The bond release decision is paramount to the pretrial phase. This decision depends on input from pretrial officers, prosecutors, and defense attorneys, but is ultimately made by judges or bonding authorities. Designed to aid in this decision-making process, pretrial risk assessment tools have been implemented in many jurisdictions

throughout the United States.² While they may differ in their construction, items, and risk outcomes, these tools are a factor that stakeholders consider during their bond arguments and decisions.

The current study sought to understand the perceived utility of a statewide pretrial risk assessment tool using focus groups of pretrial officers and supervisors, judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. A thematic content analysis of focus groups with those that carry out the pretrial process resulted in five emergent themes: a) the role of the risk assessment tool, b) how the tool is used, c) risk override and discretion, d) consideration of other factors, independent of the risk assessment, and e) training and education for the tool. These themes are relevant to the overall perceptions of the tool and its accuracy, the assessment process, and challenges to implementation.

The emergent themes indicate that the perceived accuracy of the tool and also its actual statistical accuracy may be adversely affected when the tool's risk score clashed with professional discretion. This is consistent with Gottfredson et al. (1989), who reported that negative perceptions of assessment tools can lead to resistance in the adherence to the tool's implementation protocol, as well as Latessa and Lovins (2010), who claimed that diverting from protocols could compromise the accuracy of an assessment tool. It was identified that participants overrode a risk score and considered other factors when applying professional discretion to an assessment-informed release decision. Relying on both factors to inform pretrial decisions introduces a potential conflict for pretrial decision-makers when a risk score and one's professional discretion estimate two different probable pretrial outcomes for a defendant. Findings indicate that when decision-makers are presented with this conflict, they will often favor a decision that is consistent with their own professional discretion over the assessment tool's risk score.

Themes about the assessment process emerged pertaining to both the role of the tool for different actors in the pretrial process and how it was used. It became clear from the stakeholder groups that the perceived use of the tool depends on the utility of the score to those who are using it. This was reported

²In a recent review of pretrial practices across the United States, approximately two-thirds of surveyed counties reported using a pretrial risk assessment instrument (Pretrial Justice Institute, 2019).

particularly often for defense attorneys and prosecutors that use risk assessment for their bond arguments.

Many participants stressed that they did not believe the tool was designed to directly inform decisions about supervision condition. Instead, a decision-making matrix was reported to be used that employs risk score to inform a supervision category that is used to make condition decisions. These assessments are designed to assist in release decisions, and overgeneralizing for supervision purposes can compromise the tool's accuracy. An accurate assessment designed for this purpose is needed. Overall, more research is needed about the role of pretrial supervision in mitigating FTA, recidivism, cost to pretrial defendants, and supervision noncompliance.

Relevant to the challenges of implementation, training and education about the tool and risk assessment was another emergent theme. Many respondents agreed that more education would lead to buy-in for the tool but that they had not been trained in the use of an assessment tool. Prior literature about the reliability of pretrial risk assessment tools has identified training as a critical aspect of their performance (Mamalian, 2011). This provides support for structured training and education about pretrial risk assessment to pretrial officers that administer assessments and stakeholders that use these tools to inform pretrial decisions.

Limitations of this study are found in the representativeness of the stakeholders sampled. The participants were selected based on their availability during the time these focus groups were conducted. While email invitations went out to all judges, prosecutors, pretrial officers, and defense attorneys in each of the counties, some were unable to attend, or one or two were selected internally to represent their agencies. While a limitation for representativeness, this led to smaller, more manageable groups and accomplished the goal of focus group methodology and allowing for in-depth discussions among stakeholders who hold differing views. Future research should codify these themes into a survey instrument and distribute it amongst a wide, representative sample to determine if these themes and concerns are widespread.

The qualitative feedback from this study has important implications on the use and accuracy of pretrial risk assessment. Stakeholders throughout the focus groups shared differing concerns with the tool currently being used in their jurisdictions, including how it

was constructed, how it is used, buy-in, and training and education relating to the tool. As stakeholders maintain varying concerns about the tool, clear and transparent training should be developed translating the specifics of how these tools are constructed, what they are intended to do as well as not intended to do, and standardized instructions on how the tool should be implemented.

Future research should examine how implementation across all roles in the pretrial process may impact predictive accuracy. More attention should also be given to how these tools are used to inform decisions outside of pretrial release such as bond condition assignment and pretrial supervision. Findings largely support policies that enhance and formalize training and education about pretrial risk assessment tools for pretrial stakeholders. Such a practice would fill a perceived gap in the comprehensive implementation and overall accuracy of pretrial risk assessment tools.

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