

## Assess, Inform and Measure (AIM) pilot project

The Dane County Circuit Court has joined the statewide initiative to apply evidenced based practices (EBP) to criminal sentencing. An interdisciplinary team comprised of judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, the Department of Corrections, the Clerk of Court, and court staff have adopted policies and established procedures to apply the concepts of EBP to a target population to improve defendant-related information available to judges and counsel at sentencing. If this pilot is successful, and resources permit, the intent is to expand the program over time to a wider range of cases.

On the statewide level, the Effective Justice Strategies Subcommittee (EJSS) has led the effort to explore and assess the effectiveness of policies and programs designed to improve public safety and reduce incarceration. The EJSS is studying the key factors in determining when or if an individual is appropriate to be safely diverted from a jail or prison sentence. Critical to this determination is the nature and value of the information provided to the court in advance of a sentencing decision. This is the foundation of evidence based practices.

The EJSS developed a process model titled AIM (Assess, Inform, and Measure) which is intended to provide the court with valid and reliable information that will have value in the case disposition process. This information would include a summary of the following:

- **Risk assessment** (an individual's risk to commit further crime in the community).
- **Needs assessment** (assessing treatment and service needs that are directly related to the individual's criminal behavior).
- **Responsivity assessment** (taking into account the individual's unique characteristics such as motivation to change, learning style, gender and cultural needs).
- **Community-based treatment programs** that address needs and reduce the offender's risk to the community.

In addition to providing information to the court in advance of sentencing, the other key component of the AIM model includes the development of a "**feedback loop.**" The first component, the process feedback loop, provides information on the value of the information being provided to the court. The next component, the outcome feedback loop, provides aggregate data back to the court and local criminal justice system about case outcomes, such as success/failure rates (recidivism) of offenders targeted for this project and validation of the screening/assessment process.

### Goals of the AIM Project in Dane County

The reasons for using Evidence Based Practices in criminal sentencing in the Dane County Circuit Court are:

- Provide counsel and judges a valid and objective risk, needs, responsivity and community intervention assessment for an individual defendant in order to both protect public safety and offer the defendant the best opportunity to break the cycle of criminal behavior.
- Track and report on recidivism based on characteristics of offenders and the sentences applied.
- Have a positive impact on disproportionate minority incarceration in Dane County.
- Generate measures of success/failure and overall efficacy of local treatment programs.
- Identify and use existing treatment options and determine unmet program needs.

For more information on the Dane AIM Pilot, contact Julie Beyler at (608) 267-1557