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Dane County CJC Learns Results of Multi-Year Justice Study

This week, the Dane County Community Justice Council (CJC) will learn the results of a multi-year study and research partnership with Access to Justice Lab at Harvard University-Law School. In December of 2016, Dane County began the implementation of the Public Safety Assessment (PSA), a risk assessment tool developed by Arnold Ventures, in partnership with leading criminal justice researchers. The assessment is intended to help judges gauge a defendant's risk level if released while awaiting trial on a criminal charge. The PSA is used in a number of Wisconsin counties, as well as the entire states of Kentucky, Utah, and New Jersey.

Early in 2014, the Dane County CJC and pretrial leaders reviewed evidence-based pretrial practices nationwide, and concluded Dane County may have been missing a key component in the pretrial process: an accurate and validated risk assessment tool.

"CJC members were committed to moving forward with an evidence-based tool, but mindful of the potential for mixed – and sometimes inequitable—results for County residents. Identifying best practices is only one part of a solution to criminal justice improvements; without testing the practices in a local setting, the results may be unforeseen and unexpected. We look forward to the results of this long-term research partnership," noted Community Justice Council Chair and Clerk of Circuit Court Carlo Esqueda.

D. James Greiner, PhD, J.D, the Access to Justice Lab's Faculty Director, believes more jurisdictions need to follow the CJC in trying out new ideas, but to incorporate rigorous evaluations when they do so.

"Sometimes reforms adopted with the best of intentions have bad effects. Sometimes small changes cause big improvements that no one saw coming. The only way to know is to test, credibly, what works and what doesn't," said Greiner.

On January 25th at 12:15, the CJC of Dane County will host the researchers in a special session. The community is invited to listen and learn as the CJC's research partner, Access to Justice (Harvard University) reviews the findings of a multi-year study of the Dane County pretrial risk assessment and any changes in jail stays, racial equity, and fairness outcomes. The agenda can be accessed [here](#).

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The 16 member Dane County Community Justice Council is a collaborative body created in Dane County ordinance to collaborate and improve public safety, racial equity and data driven decisions. For more information: cjc.countyofdane.com.