

# EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMED INTAKE JUDGES' EDITION BENCH CARD

In general, intake decision-making guidelines should be designed to protect the community, hold youth accountable, and address the needs of juvenile crime victims while helping juvenile offenders grow into law-abiding, productive adults. An evidence-based informed intake involves structured decision-making tools designed to help system professionals make consistent, appropriate, effective, and equitable decisions. Based on research results, these tools provide a protocol and framework that every worker can use in every case.

## *Pennsylvania Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (PaDRAI)*

What a juvenile court judge should ask themselves:

- What were the circumstances under which the PaDRAI was completed?
- What was the indicated decision?
- Were aggravating or mitigating factors considered?
- Was an override necessary?
- Were alternatives to detention (ATDs) considered?



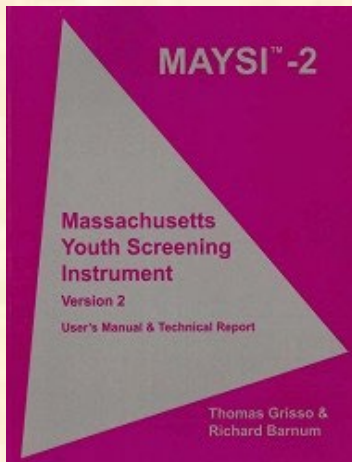
What a juvenile court judge should be aware of:

- Over-detaining youth due to subjective concerns (e.g., "gut feeling" rather than risk factors).
- Ignoring racial or socioeconomic disparities – ensure fair application across all youth.
- Neglecting to consider community-based alternatives that could be more effective and less harmful.
- Results should not be assumed to indicate a youth's risk of reoffending or failing to appear at a court hearing beyond the initial assessment for secure detention when the PaDRAI was administered.

## *Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI-2)*

What a juvenile court judge should ask themselves:

- Was a caution or warning indicated on any scale?
- Was a second screening administered?
- Was further assessment recommended?
- Were the results of the MAYSI-2 shared and explained with the youth and parent(s)/guardian(s)?
- Were the results of the MAYSI-2 considered in the dispositional recommendation?



What a juvenile court judge should be aware of:

- Using MAYSI-2 as a standalone diagnosis – it's only a screening tool, not a complete psychological evaluation.
- Ignoring high-risk indicators could put the youth at risk.
- Automatically detaining youth based on results – mental health concerns should lead to treatment-focused decisions, not just punitive measures.
- Results should not be presumed to describe a youth's mental or emotional condition beyond approximately 30 days after the results are obtained.

## Child Trauma Screen (CTS)

What a juvenile court judge should ask themselves:

- Was a second screening administered?
- Was further assessment recommended?
- Were any referrals made as a result of the trauma screen?
- Is the youth safe?
- Were the trauma screen results considered in the dispositional recommendation?

What a juvenile court judge should be aware of:

- Ignoring trauma symptoms – untreated trauma can lead to recidivism.
- Assuming all trauma-exposed youth need the same intervention – responses should be individualized.
- Over-relying on the CTS alone – it's a screening tool, not a complete diagnostic assessment.
- Results of a trauma screen should not be considered valid beyond approximately 30 days after the results are obtained.



## Youth Level of Service (YLS) Risk/Needs Assessment

What a juvenile court judge should ask themselves:



- Was the YLS completed with input from the youth and parent(s)/guardian(s)?
- Were the youths' top criminogenic needs identified?
- Were the youths' strengths identified?
- Were the youths' responsivity factors identified?
- Were the results of the YLS shared and explained with the youth and parent(s)/guardian(s)?
- What was the identified risk level?
- Was an override necessary?
- Were the results of the YLS considered in the dispositional recommendation?
- Were any referrals made as a result of the YLS?

What a juvenile court judge should be aware of:

- Over-relying on the score alone – the YLS should be used in conjunction with judicial discretion, legal considerations, and input from probation officers, psychologists, and other service providers.
- Placing low-risk youth in intensive programs can increase recidivism rather than reduce it.
- Ignoring protective factors – some youth may have strong support systems that can aid in rehabilitation.
- Except for the Prior and Current Offenses domain, which spans a lifetime observation period, the initial YLS assessment should consider the youth's current situation or the conditions present during the previous 12 months.