

Terms and Concepts

To help make the transition from subjective “seat-of-the-pants” decision making to objective “research-based” decision making, criminal justice professionals have partnered with statisticians to create structured questionnaires that can be used to help make critical judgements regarding offenders and how they should be managed. Answer the questions listed below.

What are algorithms? Give an example of where you use them in your day-to-day life? Where are they used in today’s criminal justice system?

What is the difference between the terms “risk” and “need” as those terms are used in the criminal justice system?

In the criminal justice system, how should programming for offenders be different for each of the three risk categories - low, medium, and high?

What questions or confusion do you have about these topics? This is the heart of the “new” methodologies being used in the criminal justice system, so don’t be afraid to ask.