The First Step Act of 2018

April 8, 2019

The First Step Act of 2018 aims to reform the federal prison system and reduce recidivism. A key component of the Act is an assessment of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP's) existing prisoner risk and needs assessment system. NIJ, the Justice Department's research, development, and evaluation agency, is pleased to announce our collaboration with external experts — Grant Duwe, Zachary Hamilton, and Angela Hawken — to assist in the validation and forthcoming implementation of a new risk and needs assessment system for the BOP.

Grant Duwe

Grant Duwe, Ph.D., is the Director of Research for the Minnesota Department of Corrections, where he forecasts the state's prison population, conducts program evaluations and research studies, and develops risk assessment instruments. Duwe is an author of two books, and has published more than 60 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals on a wide range of correctional topics. He has created instruments for correctional populations that assess the risk of prison misconduct and multiple types of reoffending, including violent, sex offense, felony, nonviolent, and general recidivism. Based on his work in developing the recidivism risk assessment used with Minnesota's prison population, Duwe received the inaugural Practitioner Research Award from the American Society of Criminology's Division on Corrections and Sentencing. He holds a Ph.D. in Criminology from Florida State University.

Zachary Hamilton

Zachary Hamilton, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology and the Director of the Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice. He received his Ph.D. from Rutgers University and was previously employed as a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Court Innovation (CCI) and at the National Development and Research Institutes (NDRI). His work focuses on risk and needs assessment and identifying responsive populations for treatment matching. He has developed the STRONG-R assessment for correctional populations and the M-PACT for juvenile justice populations, as well as pretrial and prison classification assessments implemented in both state and local jurisdictions nationally. He has published more than 40 peer-reviewed journal articles, chapters, and books on risk and needs assessment, evidence-based practices, and program efficacy. His achievements were recently recognized by the American Society of Criminology, which awarded him the Distinguished New Scholar Award in 2018.

Angela Hawken

Angela Hawken, Ph.D., is a Professor of Public Policy at New York University's Marron Institute where she directs the Litmus program, which includes BetaGov. The Litmus/BetaGov team — Janelle Prueter, Research Scholar at the Marron Institute, and Sandy Mullins, Senior Research Scholar at the Marron Institute — works with public agencies in 30 states on improving practices and decision-making. The group works with dozens of correctional agencies on the frontlines with corrections professionals, clinicians, counselors, incarcerated persons, and their families. Hawken and the Litmus/BetaGov team will support NIJ in its responsibilities under the First Step Act by assisting in the development of strategy and operational plans for implementing the forthcoming risk and needs assessment system.

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