## **Evaluations for Sentencing of Juveniles in Criminal Court: Best Practices**

The sentencing of juveniles in criminal court is a complex and challenging task. Juvenile offenders present a unique set of risks and needs that must be carefully considered when making sentencing decisions. Evaluations can play a vital role in informing these decisions by providing information about the juvenile's risk of reoffending, their amenability to treatment, and their need for specific services.

There are a variety of different types of evaluations that can be used in the sentencing of juveniles. These evaluations can be divided into two broad categories: risk assessments and treatment planning evaluations.

**Risk assessments** are used to predict the likelihood that a juvenile will reoffend. These assessments typically consider a variety of factors, including the juvenile's age, gender, race, prior criminal history, family background, and school performance.



**Evaluations for Sentencing of Juveniles in Criminal Court (Best Practices for Forensic Mental Health** 

**Assessments)** by Thomas Grisso

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**Treatment planning evaluations** are used to identify the specific needs of a juvenile and to develop a plan for their treatment. These evaluations typically consider the juvenile's mental health, substance abuse history, and educational needs.

There are a number of best practices that should be followed when conducting evaluations for sentencing of juveniles. These best practices include:

- Use validated instruments. The instruments used to conduct evaluations should be reliable and valid. This means that they have been shown to accurately measure the constructs they are intended to measure.
- Consider the juvenile's developmental stage. Juveniles are at a
  different stage of development than adults, and this should be taken
  into account when conducting evaluations. For example, juveniles may
  be more impulsive and less able to control their behavior than adults.
- Involve the juvenile in the evaluation process. Juveniles should be given the opportunity to participate in the evaluation process and to provide their own input. This will help to ensure that the evaluation is accurate and that the juvenile feels invested in the outcome.
- Use a multidisciplinary approach. Evaluations should be conducted by a team of professionals with expertise in different areas, such as psychology, social work, and education. This will help to ensure that

the evaluation is comprehensive and that all of the juvenile's needs are considered.

 Provide feedback to the juvenile. The juvenile should be given feedback on the results of the evaluation. This will help the juvenile to understand their risks and needs and to make informed decisions about their future.

Evaluations can provide a number of benefits in the sentencing of juveniles. These benefits include:

- Improved decision-making. Evaluations can help judges and other decision-makers to make more informed decisions about the sentencing of juveniles. By providing information about the juvenile's risk of reoffending, their amenability to treatment, and their need for specific services, evaluations can help to ensure that juveniles receive the most appropriate sentence.
- Reduced recidivism. Evaluations can help to reduce recidivism by identifying juveniles who are at high risk of reoffending and by providing them with the services they need to address their risk factors.
- Improved public safety. Evaluations can help to improve public safety by keeping juveniles out of the criminal justice system. By identifying juveniles who are at high risk of reoffending and by providing them with the services they need to address their risk factors, evaluations can help to reduce crime and violence.

Evaluations are a valuable tool in the sentencing of juveniles. By providing information about the juvenile's risk of reoffending, their amenability to

treatment, and their need for specific services, evaluations can help judges and other decision-makers to make more informed decisions about the sentencing of juveniles. Evaluations can also help to reduce recidivism and improve public safety.



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