APPR ADVANCING PRETRIAL POLICY & RESEARCH

Public Safety Assessment: How It Works

The Public Safety Assessment (PSA) is an actuarial assessment that uses nine factors to predict three pretrial outcomes: Failure to Appear (FTA), New Criminal Arrest (NCA), and New Violent Criminal Arrest (NVCA). Use of the PSA, in combination with other pretrial improvements, is associated with improved pretrial outcomes. The PSA does not replace judicial discretion. The PSA provides judicial officers with research-based information that they weigh, along with other information, to make more informed pretrial decisions.

PSA Factors and Pretrial Outcomes

This table shows the nine factors used by the PSA and which factors are used to predict each outcome.

PSA FACTORS AND PRETRIAL OUTCOMES

PSA FACTOR	FTA	NCA	NVCA
1. Age at current arrest		√	
2. Current violent offense			√
2A. Current violent offense and 20 years old or younger			√
3. Pending charge at the time of the arrest	√	√	√
4. Prior misdemeanor conviction		√	
5. Prior felony conviction		√	
5A. Prior conviction (misdemeanor or felony)	√		√
6. Prior violent conviction		√	√
7. Prior failure to appear in the past 2 years	√	√	
8. Prior failure to appear older than 2 years	√		
9. Prior sentence to incarceration		√	

Factor Weights

To calculate the scores, each PSA factor is weighted and assigned different points according to the strength of its relationship with the specific pretrial outcome. At the end of the assessment, the points for each pretrial outcome are totaled. The total points assigned to FTA and NCA are then converted to two separate scales ranging from 1 to 6. Lower scores indicate a greater likelihood of pretrial success. The points assigned to NVCA are converted to a scaled score and then to the presence or absence of a "violence flag."

The following series of tables show how the PSA assigns points to the factors for each outcome and then converts them to scaled scores or a violence flag.

Failure to Appear (FTA)

FTA refers to a person missing a pretrial court hearing and the court, in response, issuing a warrant, capias, or other similar response.

The PSA converts the total number of FTA points to a final, scaled score ranging from 1 to 6.

Failure to Appear: Points

PSA FACTOR	RESPONSE	POINTS
Pending charge at the time of the arrest	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior conviction (misdemeanor or felony)	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior failure to appear in the past 2 years	No	0
	Yes, just 1	2
	Yes, 2 or more	4
Prior failure to appear older than 2 years	No	0
	Yes	1

Failure to Appear: Scaled Score

TOTAL FTA POINTS	SCALED FTA SCORE
0	1
1	2
2	3
3 or 4	4
5 or 6	5
7	6

New Criminal Arrest (NCA)

NCA refers to a person being arrested while on pretrial release. It includes both a custodial arrest and an arrest by citation or summons.

The PSA converts the total number of NCA points to a final, scaled score ranging from 1 to 6.

New Criminal Arrest Points

PSA FACTOR	RESPONSE	POINTS
Age at current arrest	23 or older	0
	22 or younger	2
Pending charge at the time of the arrest	No	0
	Yes	3
Prior misdemeanor conviction	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior felony conviction	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior violent conviction	No	0
	Yes, 1 or 2	1
	Yes, 3 or more	2
Prior failure to appear in the past 2 years	0	0
	Yes, just 1	1
	Yes, 2 or more	2
Prior sentence to incarceration	No	0
	Yes	2

New Criminal Arrest: Scaled Score

TOTAL NCA POINTS	SCALED NCA SCORE
0	1
1 or 2	2
3 or 4	3
5 or 6	4
7 or 8	5
9 to 13	6

New Violent Criminal Arrest (NVCA)

NVCA refers to a person being arrested for a violent offense while on pretrial release. It includes both a custodial arrest and an arrest by citation or summons.

The PSA converts the total number of NVCA points to a scaled score and then to a "violence flag."

New Violent Criminal Arrest: Points

PSA FACTOR	RESPONSE	POINTS
Current violent offense	No	0
	Yes	2
Current violent offense and 20 years old or younger	No	0
	Yes	1
Pending charge at the time of the arrest	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior conviction (misdemeanor or felony)	No	0
	Yes	1
Prior violent conviction	No	0
	Yes, 1 or 2	1
	Yes, 3 or more	2

New Violent Criminal Arrest Violence Flag

TOTAL NVCA POINTS	SCALED NVCA SCORE (VIOLENCE FLAG)
0 or 1	1 (NO)
2	2 (NO)
3	3 (NO)
4	4 (YES)
5	5 (YES)
6 or 7	6 (YES)

Advancing Pretrial Policy and Research (APPR) is committed to fair, just, effective pretrial practices, every day throughout the nation. To learn more about APPR, pretrial justice, and the PSA, visit advancingpretrial.org.

PUBLIC SAFETY ASSESSMENT

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