



# Public Safety Assessment (PSA)

As of Sept. 2017, just **6%** of defendants who were released from jail based on the PSA, since its implementation 15 months ago, committed a new crime; **20%** failed to appear in court

Low-risk defendants held in custody for 2-3 days were **40%** more likely to commit new crimes before trial than equivalent defendants who had been held no more than 24 hours.

Federal courts have found the use of money bail to be unconstitutional.

## The PSA

The PSA is an objective, research-based pretrial risk-assessment tool, designed by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF), that measures *risk factors* to assist judges in making release/detention determinations. The SF Pretrial Diversion Project (SFPDP) completes a PSA on every person booked into SF County jail on a new felony or non-cited misdemeanor.

The PSA measures three types of risks during the pretrial stage: the likelihood that a defendant will commit a new crime, the likelihood that a defendant will commit a new violent crime, and the likelihood that a defendant will fail to return to court.

## Predicting Risk

The PSA relies on risk factors, which are characteristics that, when present, indicate a statistically significant increased risk of pretrial failure. By analyzing data from over 1.5 million cases drawn from more than 300 jurisdictions across the US, LJAF found that the following criminal history risk factors are the strongest predictors of failure to appear and new criminal activity:

- 1) Whether the current offense is violent
- 2) Whether the person has a pending charge at the time of arrest
- 3) Whether the person has a prior misdemeanor conviction
- 4) Whether the person has a prior felony conviction
- 5) Whether the person has a prior conviction for a violent crime
- 6) The person's age at the time of arrest
- 7) Whether the person failed to appear at a pretrial hearing
- 8) Whether the person has previously been sentenced to incarceration

## Risk Management

The PSA tool is the foundation of a new risk-based pretrial supervision model for San Francisco. Based on the three scores generated by the PSA—failure to appear (FTA), new criminal activity (NCA), and new violent criminal activity (NVCA)—the SF Pretrial Diversion Project applies a Decision Making Framework, resulting in recommendations that detain the highest risk defendants (when possible), release moderate risk defendants with interventions and services targeted to mitigate risk, and release low risk defendants with minimal or no conditions.

