



## OHIO DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

Ted Strickland, Governor • Thomas J. Stickrath, Director

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### **OHIO-SPECIFIC JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TO LAUNCH** *System Creates a State-wide 'Common Language' in Evaluating Youth*

**Columbus, Ohio** — The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS), in conjunction with the University of Cincinnati (UC), will unveil the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) tomorrow. The OYAS will help to improve Ohio's juvenile justice system by creating statewide consistency in the determination of treatment and level of supervision for juvenile offenders.

The OYAS was initially born out of the UC RECLAIM Ohio study published in 2005 that highlighted a lack of consistent assessment information available on youth. Based on a 2005 survey of juvenile courts, there were 77 different assessments used throughout the state to determine a youth's risks and needs, and more than a quarter of the juvenile courts do not use any risk/needs assessment.

"As a state, we have needed a better way of determining how to treat juveniles who get into significant trouble and how best to get them back on track," said Tom Stickrath, director of the Ohio Department of Youth Services. "DYS and juvenile judges across the state were using a variety of approaches to make those kinds of judgments. That's why I asked the criminal justice experts at UC to create a research-based way of making those kinds of assessments. With this new web-based system, Ohio's juvenile judges and youth corrections professionals all now have an outstanding, objective, evaluation tool available to them. This will enable us to make better informed decisions, thus enhancing public safety while focusing on the factors that lead to delinquency."

The OYAS is comprised of validated tools that identify the youth's risk and need areas so that an appropriate intervention can be determined. Over the past three years, UC has interviewed and collected follow-up data on 2,500 youth throughout the Ohio juvenile justice system. DHS, juvenile courts, community corrections facilities, and various community programs also supplied insight and support to the project.

"On behalf of the juvenile judges across the state we greatly appreciate access to this research-based assessment tool," said Judge Stephen Michael, president of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges. "We know how critical it is for the safety of the public, the rehabilitative efforts of the youth, and the most effective use of resources that a proper assessment be made prior to a youth's placement."

The web-based OYAS will be live tomorrow and available for use by the courts and DHS after a two-day training session. For more information about the system and research behind it, visit [www.dys.ohio.gov](http://www.dys.ohio.gov) and click on the Ohio Youth Assessment System Registration page.

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio and is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. DHS operates six correctional and rehabilitation facilities and provides parole services from six regional sites.