
Automated Reporting System for Funding and Grants Tracking for Juvenile Correctional Programs

Yahya Gilany

Research Assistant
IT Solution Center
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221, USA
yahya.gilany@uc.edu

Hazem Said, PhD

Director, School of IT
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45220, USA
Hazem.said@uc.edu

Abstract

Researchers in the juvenile criminal justice systems have been debating the effectiveness and quality of the correctional treatment programs. Many evaluations and assessment tools are developed for that purpose. Often, those correctional programs are funded by the state and/or federal governments, raising a keen interest in the topic. A robust and consistent reporting tool is needed to ensure a proper utilization of the taxpayers' money, and an affective impact on the treated youth. The paper before you, discusses this issue and a proposed enhancement to the automated risk assessment eco-system developed by the Information Technology Solutions Center (ITSC).

Author Keywords

Grant Tracking; Risk Assessment; Correction Program; Eco-System.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.4.m. Information System Application: Miscellaneous;

2018 IT Research Symposium, April 10, 2018, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. Copyright is held by the owner/author(s). Publication rights licensed to the University of Cincinnati. The IT Research Symposium reserves the right to provide a hyperlink to the author's site if the Material is used in electronic media.

The Grant Tracking Feature discussed in this abstract is part of the Risk Assessment Application copyrighted for UCCI and Information Technology Solutions Center, and the data collected is protected under a non-disclosure agreement (NDA)

Introduction

As young offenders are enrolled into the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, correction and probation officers conduct assessment sessions to gauge their risk levels and their probability of recidivating. Officers also identify the areas and domains that needs to be improved and addressed. Based on the identified weaknesses and set goals and objectives, offenders are then placed into correctional programs that targets those weaknesses and work on improving the quality of life for the young offenders. Many researchers have been focused on evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the correctional programs, developing assessment tools and checklists to aid in this process. ITSC has been working on a cloud-based digitalized risk assessment tool (RA) to track youth entering the criminal justice system. The system was developed based on the research produced by the University of Cincinnati's Corrections Institute and the School of Criminal Justice to ensure a standardized assessment process, and proper placement to the appropriate programs. The system can be enhanced to provide reporting tools for the state administrators to provide them with the statistics that can drive revisiting the grant disbursement to the correctional programs and to guarantee a legitimate utilization of the public fund.

Problem Statement

Many of the checklist used to evaluate programs are mainly focused on the administrative aspect of those program and assess the program based on questions such as, what the educational background of the program director? Or is the program focused to a special population or not. However, there were cases where programs were receiving funding around the fiscal year and weren't assigned any offenders at all.

Also, youth could join a program and complete the treatment period with no improvements in the domains that meant to be treated. The lack of a consistent source to track youth and programs and their performances results in many misuse of the public funds.

Proposed Solution

The proposed solution is an additional feature that can be added to the RA system which serves as the single source of truth where youth assessment scores, and program assignments, and additional program information can be cross-matched and presented to the concerned parties as reports. Those reports will drive the decision-making process for the state and federal administrators.

The system will need to expand on the type of information it collects about the programs to include: funding sources and types, activity purposes (behavioral change program, skill knowledge, etc.), service locations (residential vs community programs). As Correction and probation officers assign offenders to programs, the system can populate a grant-tracking report that shows the individuals assigned to different programs. The report can also be built to track the individuals' assessment scores before and after the treatment periods as a measurable change indicator. An artificial recommendation system can be built into the system to help probation officers place their youth into programs that has proved effective.

Research Contributions and Significance

If successful, the Risk Assessment System developed by the IT Solutions Center will be able to automatically generate reports that includes statistics about the

number of youth treated by the grant-funded programs, as well as an evidence-based indicator of the youth performance based on their assessment score before and after the treatment course provided by the program. The feature will not only alleviate the burden of manually compiling those reports but also provide the state administrators a practical indicator of how well their grants money are being spent. Finally, the success in collecting this information will allow for the development of the correctional programs recommendation system which will guarantee placement into effective programs, retirement of ineffective ones and, ultimately, eliminating the waste of the public fund.

References

1. Lowenkamp, C. T., Latessa, E. J., & Holsinger, A. M. (2006). The risk principle in action: What have we learned from 13,676 offenders and 97 correctional programs?. *Crime & Delinquency*, 52(1), 77-93.
2. Lösel, F. (2001). Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional programs: Bridging the gap between research and practice. *Offender rehabilitation in practice: Implementing and evaluating effective programs*, 67-92.
3. Pealer, J. A., & Latessa, E. J. (2004). Applying the principles of effective intervention to juvenile correctional programs. *Corrections Today*, 66(7), 26-29.
4. Whitehead, J. T., & Lab, S. P. (1989). A meta-analysis of juvenile correctional treatment. *Journal of research in Crime and Delinquency*, 26(3), 276-295.