



National Council on  
Crime & Delinquency



# Data-Informed Practice: How Texas Is Developing and Implementing the Structured Decision Making® Model



# Agenda

## Presentation Overview

- Introductions
- Drivers of Change
- Structured Decision Making® (SDM) Overview  
Predictive Data Analysis
- Development Process
- Inter-Rater Reliability Testing
- Field Test
- Impact on Practice

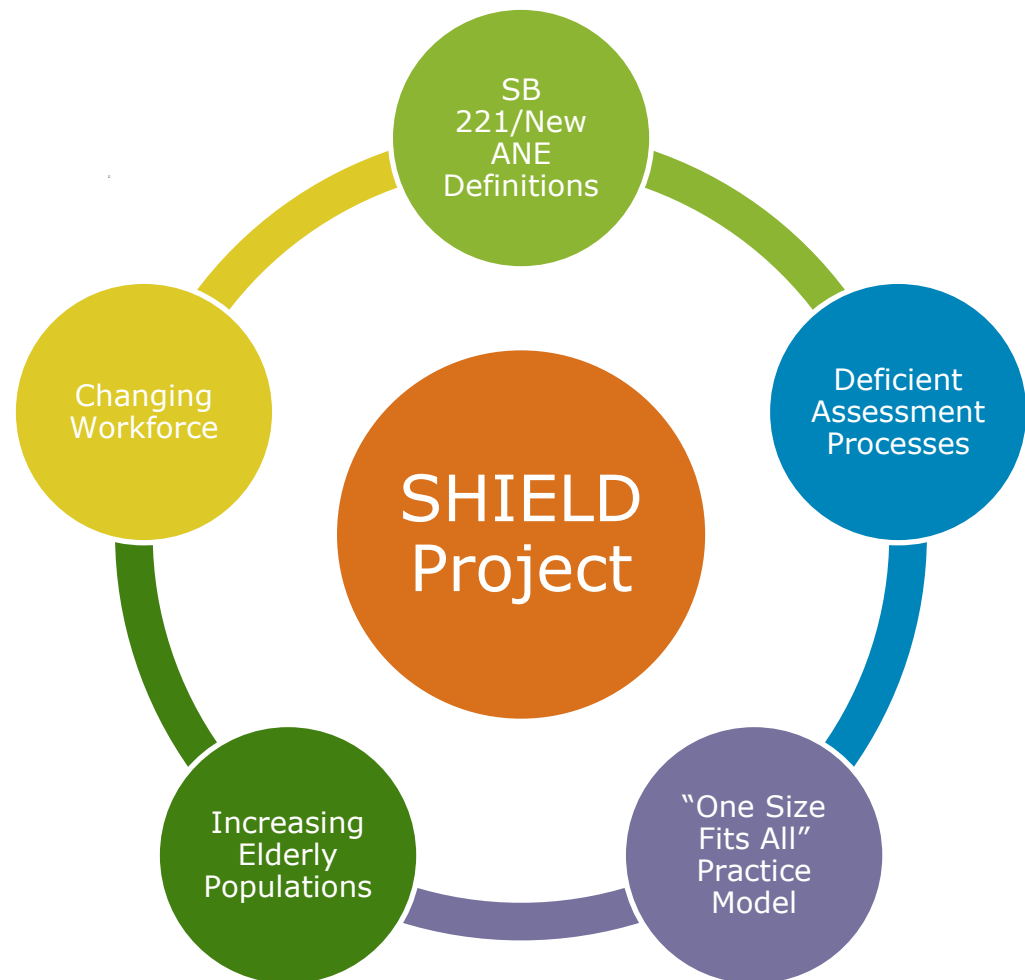
# Objectives

- Participants will learn about the drivers for practice reform in Texas.
- Participants will learn about the steps taken to develop valid, reliable, equitable, and useful assessment tools.
- Participants will understand how data can be used to inform practice.

# Drivers of Change

# Project Drivers: Why are we doing this?

- Review of abuse/neglect/exploitation (ANE) definitions and the assessment processes revealed that new processes are needed to more effectively assess client safety and risk.
- Practice relies on legacy tool Client Assessment Risk Evaluation (CARE) and does not evaluate safety and risk.
- Inefficiencies in policy divert APS resources from clients most in need.



# Business Goals

Business Goal	Description
Improved Caseworker and Supervisor Consistency and Accuracy in Decision Making	Provide caseworkers with a simple, objective, and reliable process to assess level of client recidivistic risk, support caseworkers' decisions, and increase decision-making consistency and accuracy.
Resources More Efficiently Targeted to High-Risk Clients	<p>Define the new practice model to adjust procedures and services based on the level of recidivistic risk and other case characteristics. Currently, all cases require the same procedure regardless of case characteristics.</p> <p>For example, a simple “self-neglect/bill paying” case requires the same procedure and level of documentation as an investigation with an alleged perpetrator. In the new practice model, adult protective services (APS) investigators would have fewer required procedures and less documentation for simpler cases, allowing them to focus on higher-risk cases.</p>

# Anticipated Outcomes

APS Management	Field Staff (Supervisors and Caseworkers)	Clients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More efficient use of field staff time toward high-risk clients.</li> <li>• Optimized assessment processes for low-risk cases, leading to reduced case durations</li> <li>• Reduced recidivism rates through improved risk assessment processes</li> <li>• Enhanced reporting and workload management via added dimensions/lenses provided by assessments</li> <li>• Increased retention of new caseworkers through improved support of caseworker decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance in gathering the most important information</li> <li>• Focus on key points during decision making</li> <li>• Improved decision making on difficult cases</li> <li>• A common language for case discussion</li> <li>• Increased effectiveness of newer staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faster service delivery time for simple/low-risk cases</li> <li>• Enhanced services for high-risk cases through improved risk detection and service delivery</li> <li>• Improved outcomes for APS clients</li> </ul>



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# The SDM<sup>®</sup> System for APS



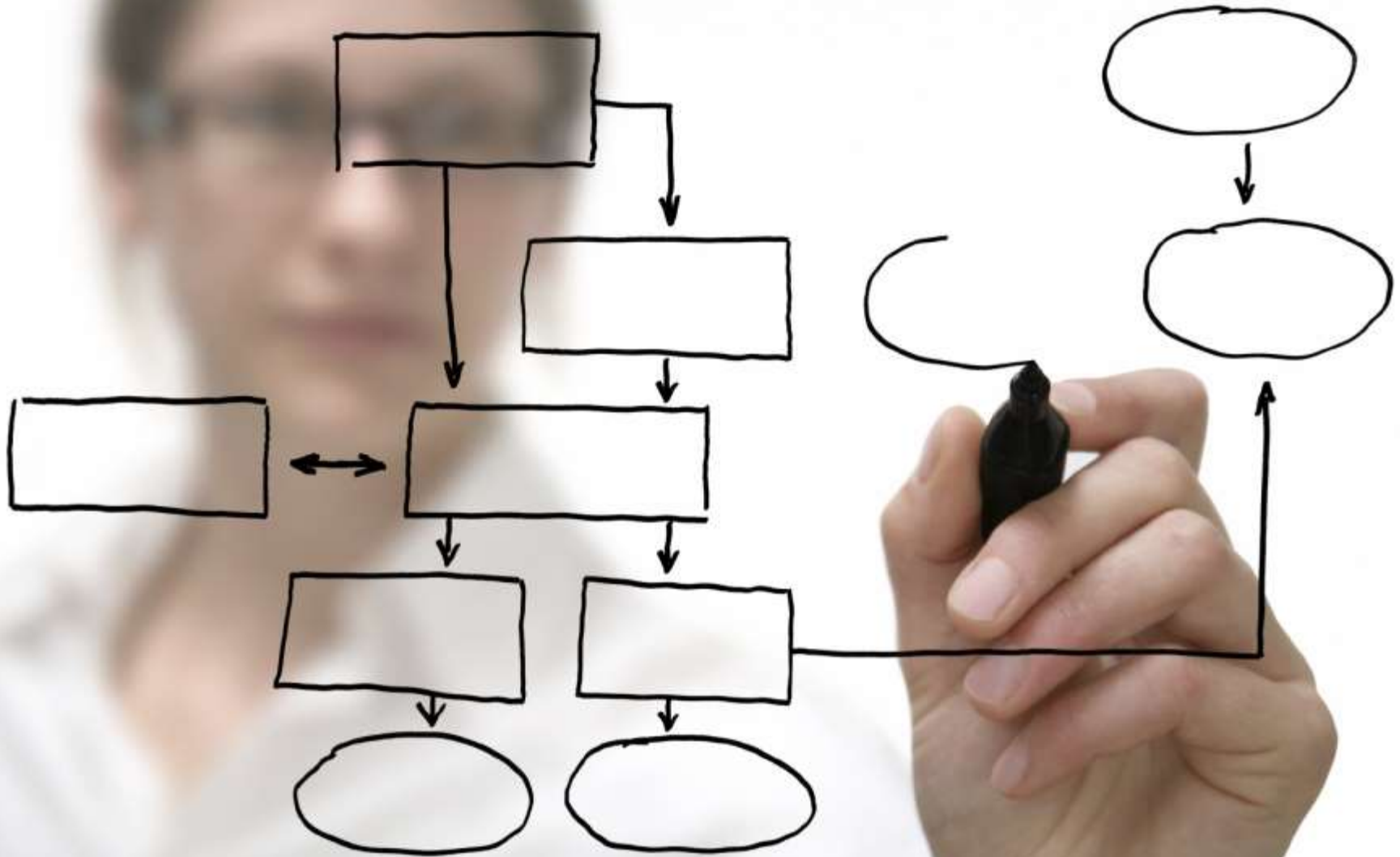


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## **Our Mission**

NCCD promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice.

# Benefits of Structuring Decisions



# APS Projects

- California
  - » Riverside County
  - » San Diego County
  - » Orange County
  - » Yolo County
- New Hampshire
- National Institute of Justice grant
- Minnesota County Collaborative
- National APS Resource Center partner
- Norfolk, Virginia

# System Goals

- Promote safety
- Identify needs
- Reduce harm

# System Objectives

- Provide workers with **simple, objective, reliable** assessments to support their decisions.
- Increase **consistency** and **accuracy** in decision making.
- Provide managers and administrators with **management information** for improved program planning, evaluation, and resource allocation.

# Principles of the SDM<sup>®</sup> System



**Reliability**



**Validity**

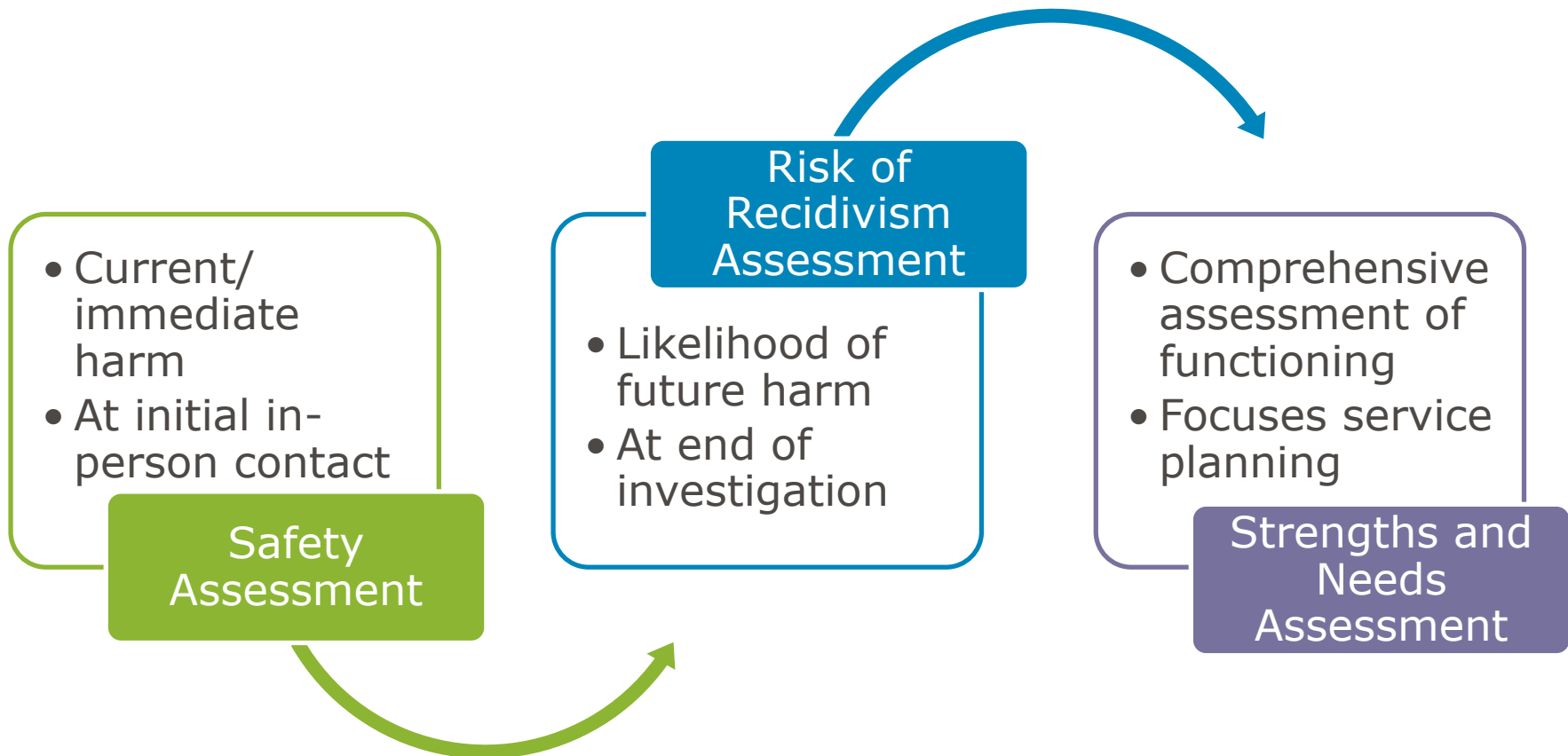


**Equity**



**Utility / Efficacy**

# The Assessments



# Predictive Data Analysis



# Risk Assessment

## Development

- US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice grant (October 2008)
- Development of an actuarial APS risk assessment
- New Hampshire Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services
- Three phase project
  - » Phase 1: Preliminary assessment development, training, reliability testing
  - » Phase 2: Process evaluation
  - » Phase 3: Validation study

# Risk Assessment

## **Risk in the SDM Context**

- Occurs at the end of the investigation.
- Informs:
  - » Need for ongoing services/intervention; and
  - » Level of engagement with clients who have cases opened for services.

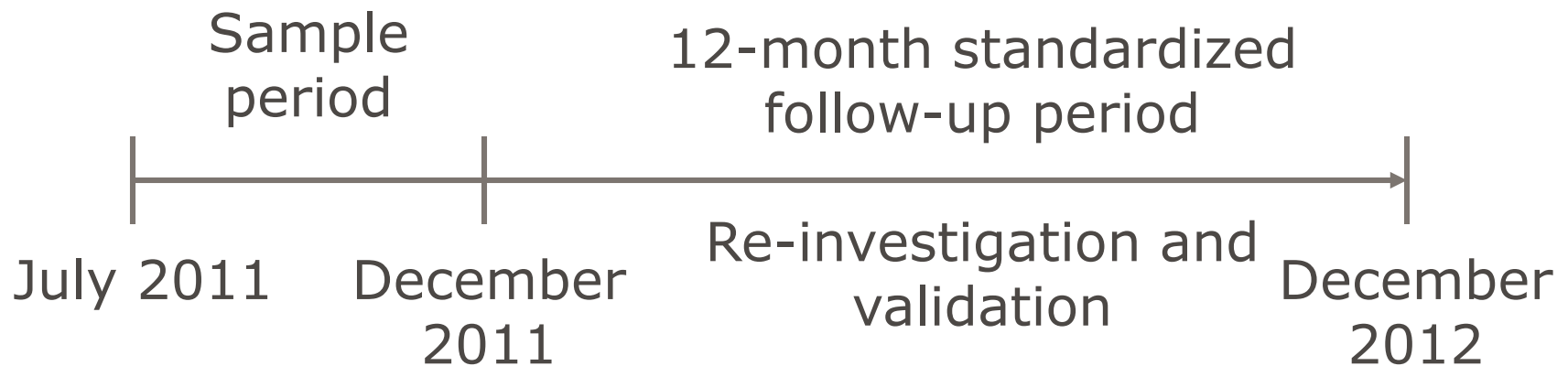
# Risk Assessment

## What is actuarial research?

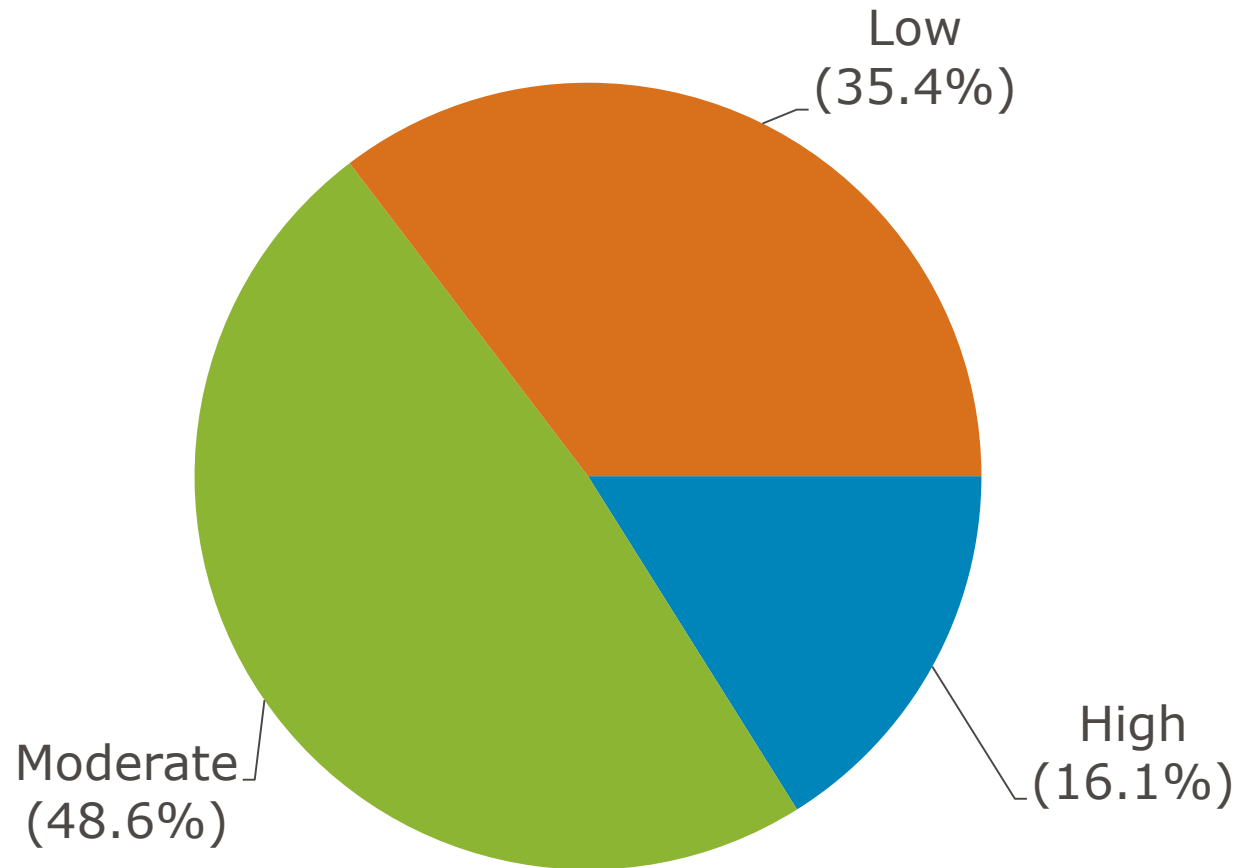
- A simple statistical procedure for estimating the probability that a “critical” event will occur at some future time.
- In the auto insurance industry, the critical event is a car accident involving a driver insured by the agency. Among breast cancer patients, the critical event is recurrence of cancer, and risk informs treatment determination.
- In this case, the critical event is the **likelihood of future self-neglect or ANE by another person.**

# SDM® Risk of Recidivism Assessment Study

## Retrospective Sample Timeframe



# Texas Risk of Recidivism Classification Distribution



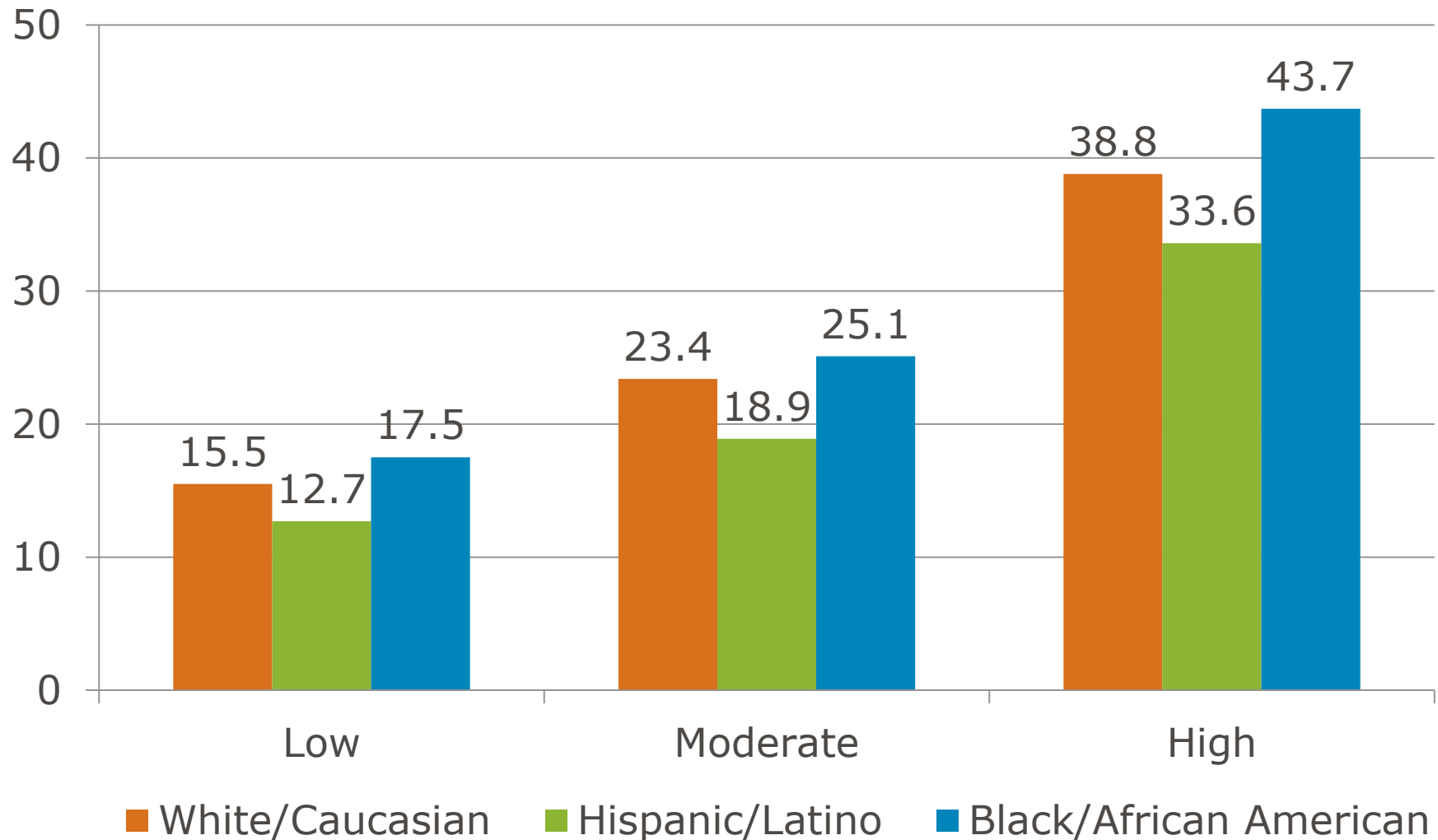
N = 18,465

# Texas Risk of Recidivism Data Analysis

## Harm Outcomes by Overall Calibrated Risk of Recidivism Classification

Calibrated Overall Risk Level	Sample Distribution		Outcomes During the 12-Month Follow-up Period	
	N	%	Investigated	Validated
Low	6,593	35.4%	15.2%	12.2%
Moderate	9,058	48.6%	22.5%	17.7%
High	2,994	16.1%	38.4%	32.5%
<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>18,645</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>

# Subsequent Investigation by Risk Classification and Race/Ethnicity of Alleged Victim



# Development Process



# Focus Groups

## Developing Our Understanding

- Identify issues or gaps with current practice, policy, and tools
- Create a “grassroots” feeling with field staff about upcoming change
- Conducted separate focus groups with caseworkers, supervisors, subject matter experts (SME), and program administrators
- Key takeaways
  - » Mixing of the terms safety and risk
  - » Decision-support tools evolved into documentation main points
  - » Flexibility of the policy and assessment processes need to reflect actual casework

# Staff Survey

## Confirming What We Learned

Statewide survey of caseworkers, supervisors, SMEs, and program administrators

- Surprisingly more support for the current assessments from frontline caseworkers
- Majority of caseworkers found that decisions are easy to make
- Agreement on the necessity of improved decision-support tools increases from caseworkers to administrators
- Support for increasing client contacts based on client risk

# Development Workgroups

## Designing Our New Casework Practice Model

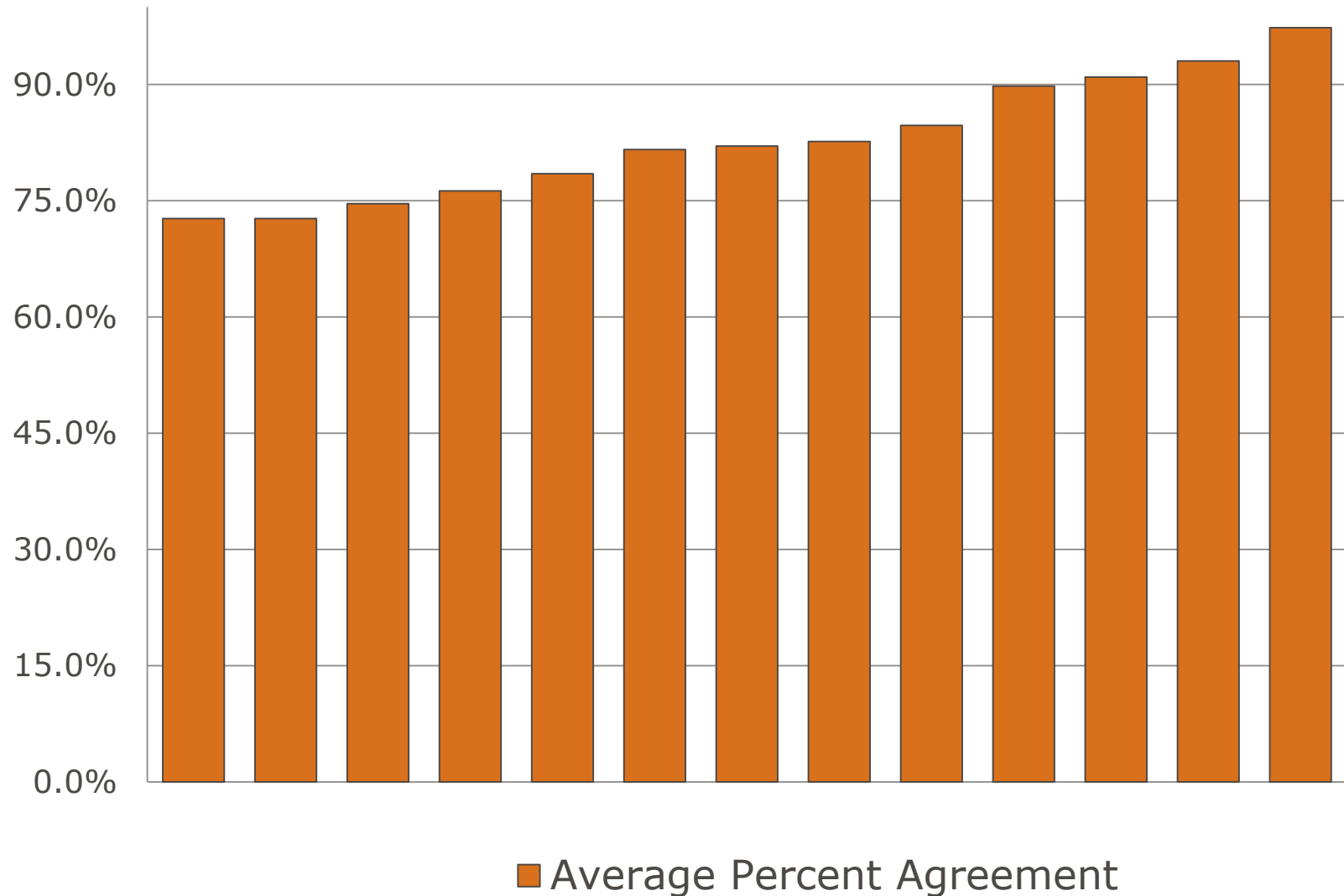
- Workgroup formed from staff at each level and each region
  - » The new model must work in El Paso and Houston
- Objectives and requirements were established
  - » Look at the entire practice model—this is not just about switching tools
  - » What are we trying to achieve?
  - » Statute compliance
- Design meetings
  - » Adapting the “out-of-the-box” solution
  - » Revising definitions, case flow
  - » Bringing together the “big picture”

# Inter-Rater Reliability Testing

# Methods

- The objective is to test the ability of definitions to lead people to consistent choices when provided with the same case information.
- A total of 64 APS workers reviewed 10 vignettes.

# Safety Assessment: Current Factors and Decision



# Field Test

# Field Test

**254 Counties, 11 Regions, 85 Units, 540 Caseworkers**





# Field Test

## Testing Definitions and More

- Do the definitions “translate”?
- Rural versus urban
- Demographics across the state
- “Good” and “not so good” units
- Tenured and new staff

# Field Test

## **Additional Field Test Benefits**

- Statewide exposure
- Early development of “expert” users
- Field buy-in

# Field Test

## Results

- Lots of implementation questions
- Some minor changes/clarifications to definitions
- Suggestions for building in IMPACT
- Field support

# Impact on Practice

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## **Implementation (Next Steps)**

- IMPACT changes (IT)
- Communication plan
- Training
- Field support
- Recalibration

# Impact on Practice

## Expected Practice Changes

- Align practice and IMPACT
- Quickly close appropriate cases
- Target resources
- Guidance/structure for client contacts (ICS)

# Impact on Practice

## **What We Are Concerned About**

- Case management requires a different skill set
  - » Training and tools needed to support ICS
  - » Potential for specialization
- Workload management in the new model
  - » What does specialization look like in rural areas?
  - » What is an appropriate caseload in a specialized model?

# Questions?