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Service Planning Instrument

An Innovative Assessment and Case Planning Tool

The Service Planning Instrument (SPIn) is a 90-item tool for assessing risk, need and protective factors. It can be used in adult probation, parole, custody and other criminal justice settings where there is a requirement to assess risk of recidivism and identify service needs. The SPIn includes an abbreviated 35-item "Pre-Screening" version used for making initial classification decisions about supervision levels. Based on a variety of assessment sources, SPIn provides a template for entering information that has been collected by probation officers, classification officers, and other case managers.

The goal of SPIn is to gather and analyze objective information for developing case plans that will ultimately reduce offender recidivism.

SPIn builds on exciting developments from juvenile assessment - better links to case planning, inclusion of protective factors, and a sharper focus on dynamic reassessment. Modeled after YASI (Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument), the juvenile version of the assessment, SPIn provides a strong foundation for effective casework with high risk adults.

The Challenge of Case Planning

An enduring challenge of case work is to implement assessment tools in a way that helps staff initiate individualized case planning. In many instances case managers complete risk and need assessments thoroughly, but fail to bring the process to the next level. Frequently, assessments are relegated to the offender's file before review or analysis – sometimes without even generating classification results.

Research on risk and need assessment points to relevant predictive content for composition of assessment tools. The research tells us which characteristics of offenders predict recidivism and identifies the risk factors that need to be addressed to promote positive outcomes. In designing the SPIn, it was recognized that new advances in assessment must now focus on user application issues – i.e., building assessment interfaces that help users apply the results.

A critical feature of the SPIn approach is to link assessment results in an immediate way to the process of individualized case planning and appropriate service provision. *Hence, the name Service Planning Instrument.* This is achieved through a number of features that were carefully constructed in the model:

- Case planning software that uses an attractive graphical interface
- Focus on reassessment for monitoring the progress of case planning and supervision objectives
- Training that emphasizes case planning as the objective of assessment.

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The SPIn has benefited from the contributions of a team of researchers and clinical experts. With many years of accumulated experience, the team has worked in risk assessment design and testing, program development, training, and implementation of assessment instruments in many community supervision, correctional and custodial settings.

The case planning approach that is used consists of discrete steps practitioners use to select appropriate goals and action steps, while developing offender motivation to follow the plan. The case planning model has been successfully applied in a number of jurisdictions with varied offender populations. Over the years, the model has been revised and refined to enhance success.

The model consists of the following components:

- *Mapping* (assessment)

- *Finding the Hook* (developing offender motivation)

- *Moving Forward* (implementing services, interventions and supervision approaches)

- *Reviewing and Supporting* (managing the plan as it progresses)

Each of the case planning steps are intimately tied to assessment results. The model emphasizes that assessment must inform case management decision-making and the development of individualized plans to reduce recidivism.

The recommended case planning steps begin with an analysis of the results of a SPIn assessment as a method of identifying the targets of service that are most likely to achieve positive change, and therefore favorable outcomes. The next steps focus on how to gain the offender's cooperation with the plan, and on the development of realistic action steps that will achieve the results. As the plan is implemented, ongoing monitoring of the plan and provision of focused support becomes essential. All of the case planning steps are clearly linked to the SPIn, from initial assessment to dynamic reassessment.

Content

The selection of SPIn items was based on an extensive review of the risk and need assessment literature. The review ensured that the most current findings on offender assessment were taken into account in developing the new adult assessment tool (see reference list for examples). Accordingly, the selection and weighting of ten SPIn scales (and their constituent items) was guided by the results of the literature review. The review also gave particular attention to research on the prediction of violence, so that relevant content on aggression and violence could be incorporated in SPIn domains (Douglas, Cox & Webster, 1999).

The ten SPIn domains include traditional static factors (usually related to criminal history), as well as a number of dynamic risk factors that have emerged from research on "criminogenic" needs. Supported by research, most of the domains also link to a variety of interventions and program areas that have developed based on research over the past 20 years.

Because assessment research has converged so clearly on the identification of offender risk and need factors over the past 20 years (Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990; Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996), the content of SPIn overlaps with many existing risk / need assessment inventories. However, the SPIn also offers a fresh approach by incorporating the most recent research and the newest measurement advances. Some traditional risk domains have been re-conceptualized in the SPIn, while newer research-based items have been introduced.

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Protective Factors or Strengths

A key element of innovation is the measurement of protective factors. These are strength factors that are likely to help reduce or "cushion" the negative impact of risk factors for many offenders. Highly intuitive for case managers, the assessment of protective factors focuses case plans to capitalize on strengths and helps develop resources for offender success. The incorporation of strengths grounds the model in a case planning process that is mobilizing for both offenders and the professionals who help develop and monitor case plans. The idea of protective factors is not new! Many case managers already use "strengths" in their thinking about how to approach their work. Yet, assessment of protective factors as an area worthy of effort has been a recent development (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992). The SPIn now provides case managers with the ability to assess and monitor protective factors using objective measurement techniques.

Static and Dynamic Factors

Both "static" (historical and unchangeable) and "dynamic" (changeable) factors are included in the SPIn. Static factors (e.g., criminal record) are necessary and efficient predictors of recidivism. Dynamic factors are predictors of recidivism that also point to the characteristics and behavioral patterns of offenders that need to change in order to reduce future offending.

The more static or historical SPIn scales include *criminal history* (e.g., age at first arrest, previous convictions, incarcerations, variety of offending, etc.), *response to supervision* (e.g., violations of supervision, escapes, failures to appear), and *aggression/violence* (e.g., indications of previous violent behavior, including convictions, domestic violence, etc.).

Among the more dynamic changeable factors are *substance use*, *social influences*, *family*, *employment*, *stability*, *attitudes*, and *social/cognitive skills*. The *aggression/violence* domain also includes a dynamic component designed to assess anger and hostility management and attitudes that support the use of violence.

The Importance of Dynamic Factors

Reflecting their importance in targeting "changeable" risk factors, the SPIn has been designed to focus particular attention on dynamic elements. Frequently, static and dynamic factors are combined in assessment tools, making it difficult to separate the two types of scores. Yet for reassessment purposes, it is important to focus on the factors that are amenable to change. By examining dynamic factors specifically at reassessment, a SPIn achieves a clearer assessment of whether the offender's dynamic risk is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same.

The **Full Assessment SPIn** produces results for both static and dynamic factors, showing "low", "moderate" and "high" levels for both risk categories. Moreover, in order to provide extra sensitivity for detecting change, the overall dynamic risk scores are displayed for 6 levels ("low", "low moderate", "moderate", "moderate high", "high", and "very high"). This scoring system also helps identify extreme groupings (e.g., very high dynamic risk) so that resources can be more efficiently allocated in case management settings where services are particularly scarce.

A Glance at Innovative Features of SPIn Domains…

✓ *Response to Supervision -*Traditionally, criminal history (e.g., offense information, dispositions) and behavior under supervision (e.g., probation violations, failures to appear in court) are combined in a static criminal history domain. The SPIn includes both types of items, but uses separate domains to summarize their measurement. For example, a new scale "Response to Supervision" has been constructed so that case managers have a better picture of previous supervision behavior. The results for previous response to supervision are displayed as separate score from the criminal history (offense and dispositional details).

✓ **Violence/Aggression** – There have been modest gains in predicting violent and aggressive behavior in recent years. However, in order to be responsive to the public's desire for more scrutiny in this area, many case managers wish to include history of violent behavior in their assessments. SPIn achieves this by assessing historical behavior associated with predicting violence and more dynamic characteristics such as anger, hostility and minimization of aggression. Domain scores are generated for Violence / Aggression with both static (past violence) and dynamic components (i.e., attitudinal and behavioral dispositions). The dynamic score can be used to identify offenders who are likely to benefit from anger management, programming that addresses violence attitudes, or need more attentive supervision to monitor potentially volatile behavior.

✓ **Substance Use** – The effect of substance use on criminal behavior and substance use that causes a disruption in functioning are two areas assessed in the Substance Use domain. In addition, the SPIn measures type and frequency of substance use. The domain includes a measure of progress for offenders who are making gains in addressing their substance use problems.

✓ **Social Influences** – The Social Influences domain surveys many potential positive and negative sources of influence in the offender's life (peers, community involvement, family). Measuring social influences dynamically was given special attention. This domain helps case managers identify ways to more effectively target social influence factors in their case plans.

✓ **Family** – The Family domain focuses on the challenges and rewards the offender faces in meeting marital and parental responsibilities. The Family domain was designed to help case managers set goals and action plans in the family realm and to monitor changes that affect risk.

✓ **Employment –** There has been increasing interest and research in the Employment domain. Offenders who are successful in employment have reduced recidivism. As such, new interventions have emerged to address employment related concerns and there has been progress in measuring employment service needs. SPIn identifies a number of potential employment-related targets for case planning purposes, including employment motivation, employment barriers, and job search skill deficits.

✓ **Stability –** The Stability domain focuses on problems that can inhibit an offender's adjustment including financial, accommodation, life skills, and transportation. These challenges are grouped in a single domain to help summarize issues that may have broader implications for planning and referrals.

✓ **Mental Health –** A range of mental health items are included to document when offenders have mental health conditions or past experiences that may influence their adjustment (e.g., trauma, abuse). The mental health domain is scored as a service attention area rather than risk of recidivism. Flags are used as indicators when there are mental health issues that require attention.

✓ **Attitudes and Skills -** Attitudes and skills are often viewed as too "subjective" and difficult to measure reliably. Yet research consistently shows that anti-social attitudes and characteristics such as poor impulse control skills, are among the strongest predictors of recidivism. To assess these domains, SPIn derives important measurement information from semi-structured interviews. Using multiple items and multiple response categories helps achieve good measurements of these critical areas that have important links to services and programs. The SPIn Full Assessment domain for Attitudes links to a number of interventions that target anti-social attitudes and poor motivation.   The Social/Cognitive Skills domain assesses the need for cognitive skills and interpersonal skills training interventions (Robinson, Porporino & Beal, 1998). Although the Attitude and Skills domains are relatively detailed, this promotes greater reliability for reassessments, and also provides a more practical range of attitudes and behaviors to target for intervention and monitoring of change.

Flexibility

The SPIn has been designed to function in a variety of settings. Like most risk/need assessment devices, the content of the SPIn will function in probation, parole, half-way houses, day-reporting centres, custodial facilities, and other contexts where there is a need to predict recidivism and identify relevant needs. Using software routines for entering SPIn data, users benefit from customized versions that allow them to skip items that don't apply (e.g., incarceration information for offenders who have no history of incarceration, etc.), and focus on items that are most relevant to the dispositions being managed.

Pre-Screen SPIn

The SPIn includes *PRE-SCREEN and FULL ASSESSMENT* versions. The Pre-Screen employs 30 highly predictive static and dynamic items that yield classifications of "low", "moderate", and "high" risk of reoffending. As a timesaving device, the Pre-Screen rapidly identifies the "moderate" and "high" risk cases that will need more intensive services. For cases that pre-screen as higher risk, the Full Assessment is recommended as a method for developing a detailed profile of the dynamic risk factors that will become the focus of case planning.

As a research-informed "triage" approach, the Pre-Screen helps introduce greater efficiency in the assessment and case planning process.

While a brief interview with the offender is required for completing the Pre-Screen, information about many pre-screen items is readily available through case files, existing social histories and other sources of data that may be already available when the case manager begins the assessment. Using SPIn software, Pre-Screen results are displayed for Static and Dynamic risk using "low", "moderate", and "high" risk levels. The Pre-Screen software also produces a list of the key need "**areas of concern**" (e.g., aggression, substance abuse, employment, etc.) that are likely to provide direction for case planning and supervision priorities (see example below).

Overall Risk

Moderate

Static Risk   Dynamic Risk

Moderate   Low

Pre-Screen Protective

Low

Areas Contributing to Risk

Criminal History	Employment
Response to Supervision	Attitudes
Aggression / Violence	Social Cognitive Skills
Substance Use	Stability
Social Influences	Mental Health
Family	

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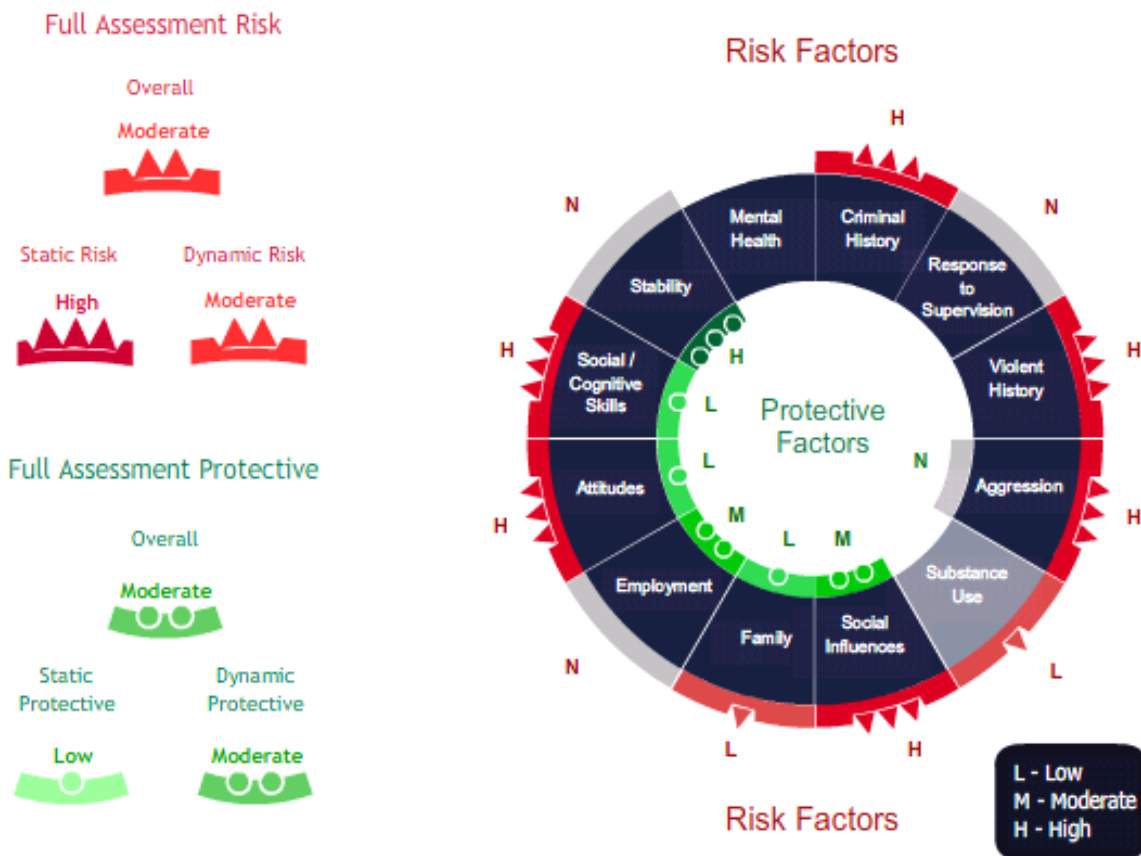
Full-Assessment SPIn

The Full Assessment builds on the Pre-Screen to provide a more detailed case planning assessment of risk, needs and strengths. The Full Assessment contains many items that easily translate into case plan goals or "targets". There is a concentration of dynamic items (both need and strength) that can be reassessed as the offender's supervision proceeds. The Full Assessment ensures that the case plans and the ongoing monitoring of the offender's progress is based on factors that are behaviorally based and grounded in current research on factors that affect offending.

The software component that generates Full Assessment results has been designed to allow for an integrated approach to case planning. The results of the full assessment and the case planning steps are conveniently linked with functionality that encourages solid case analysis and tracking of progress.

Software

The web-based platform, CaseWorks, provides a number of useful features for displaying results and aggregating data across multiple caseloads within jurisdictions. Results are shown for both overall risk and risk levels within individual domains (e.g., substance use, attitudes, etc.). In addition, the software breaks the overall results down by static and dynamic totals.

The Full Assessment results are graphically displayed using a "wheel" to show both risk and protective factor levels for the various domains (see below). Users can then click directly on areas of the wheel that represent potential targets of intervention for the offender's case plan. When a user selects a particular domain as a priority, this priority is carried forward throughout the case plan module. This allows users to supply more information about the goals, action steps, and interventions for addressing the priority domain. Referral sources can be recorded and the software allows case managers to track progress on goals that have been established.

Social History/Pre-Disposition Reports

Because of the numerous items and comprehensive content of the Full Assessment, SPIn furnishes a rich source of information for social histories and pre-disposition reports. SPIn generates a computer scripted narrative report that can be customized to serve the needs of probation departments, courts, case plan reviews, and referral sources. The narrative report provides case managers with an initial draft of a report that can be edited to serve specific purposes.

Information Management Potential

Aggregate reporting of assessment statistics is another key function of SPIn software. While the SPIn is not meant to replace existing information management software used in probation, parole, and other criminal justice settings, the richness of the assessment database provides an important source of information for identifying service gaps, allocating scarce case management resources, and other service planning purposes.

Managers can produce statistics that profile the risk levels of the adult population being served and trends in risk, need and protective factor levels across the 10 domains can be identified. The ability to breakdown results by a variety of service types (e.g., intensive supervision, diversion, sentence length, custody, etc.) and demographic characteristics of offenders (e.g., age, gender, etc.) provide important tools for profiling the diversity of service needs across sub-populations or compiling information for measuring performance. The statistical function also provides the ability to examine the caseload characteristics for individual case managers. A number of software features are included for assessing the quality of assessment data and performing database maintenance.

SPIn Training

Training for use of the SPIn is conducted in two stages. An initial two-day training focuses on how to conduct an assessment using SPIn – collecting the necessary information through interviews, case records and collateral contacts. The training prepares users to return to their work settings and begin to complete assessments using SPIn and generate the results. The second two-day follow-up training is devoted entirely to case planning using SPIn results. Participants develop an enhanced case management skill set to work with their clients to set goals and begin to implement action steps that will match the needs identified from SPIn profiles. Our training strategy employs dynamic presentations, audio visual content, attractive training materials, and group and individual exercises aimed at building participant skills.

Research-based principles (commonly termed "what works") inform all of the training and effectively link the components of assessment, supervision, and case planning. A motivational approach to working with offenders is reinforced throughout the training series. Attention to motivational techniques includes interview skills and skills for engaging the offender in the case planning process. Advances made in Motivational Interviewing (MI) and an understanding of the concept of offender change provide a strong foundation. Video-taped demonstration of SPIn interviews and case planning sessions help reinforce skills. E-Training is also available for smaller jurisdictions where on-site training may not be feasible.

Customization

SPIn items can be customized for individual jurisdictions and for varying criminal justice purposes. Using language that reflects local practice promotes credibility and trust in the assessment process among staff. The wording of SPIn items can be modified to reflect local practice and preferences.

Compatibility with YASI

Many of the features of the SPIn model are consistent with the YASI (Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument) used in juvenile probation. Hence, the use of SPIn software in jurisdictions already employing YASI will provide streamlined installation, implementation and support. In addition, integration of YASI / SPIn with other case management information systems will be more straight forward and involve less duplication in design and installation procedures. An additional advantage concerns the overlap in style and content of YASI and SPIn. For example, juveniles assessed using YASI who later move to adult probation (with criminal convictions) can be easily transferred to SPIn. Officers who supervise both adults and juveniles will also benefit from the similarity of the two models. Future upgrading of both tools will take advantage of developments in both YASI and SPIn software applications.

Implementation Support

Providing support is an important objective in helping jurisdictions successfully implement new methods to conduct daily business. Supportive activity is crucial:

- *Before training*
- *During training*
- *Following training*

Orbis Partners strives to provide project managers and users with the necessary support to address the inevitable challenges that arise in implementing a new assessment and case planning approach. *Before* training support focuses on assessing training needs and helping managers determine the steps needed to prepare an implementation plan for the new assessment and case planning model. *During* training, the support focuses on laying the groundwork to help staff learn the assessment procedures and develop confidence in their ability to apply the skills. *Following* training support shifts to providing ongoing coaching and reinforcement for the implementation of the model. This includes consultation on how to adapt the model to the jurisdictions unique needs, develop awareness of quality assurance, and offer information management assistance in order to make best use of aggregate assessment data.

Through accessible software support, consulting on the application of the tools in a variety of settings, and through data feedback, Orbis Partners is committed to help jurisdictions maintain project momentum. Toll-free telephone support, e-mail, training, and site visits are among the vehicles used to provide support.

Cost

The SPIn is made available to jurisdictions as a "Service Package" that includes instrument customization, training, software, technical support, application consulting, and validation/research services. The service package includes unlimited use of the assessment tool for initial assessments and reassessments with no costs per administrations. Jurisdictions may also opt for a train-the-trainer certification process in order to meet the demand for ongoing training or subscribe to our E-Training solution. CaseWorks, the web-based software, can be hosted by Orbis Partners for an annual fee, or can be licensed for installation on the local network of a jurisdiction.

SPIn Implementation Team

The SPIn was designed by a team of experts in assessment and offender programming with many years of experience in both the adult and juvenile fields. Combining research, training and clinical skills, the team has benefited from the practical experience of implementing assessment tools and offender programs in a variety of settings across the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia.

In addition to the design team, Orbis Partners maintains a full-time staff complement responsible for ongoing research, training, software development, and technical support. Part-time associates who actively deliver services to offenders or supervise front-line staff also contribute to training on assessment and case planning. The dynamic team that has been assembled by Orbis Partners is well resourced to provide rapid response and support with implementation.

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