

MASTLE



Massachusetts Arrest Screening Tool for Law Enforcement

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The Massachusetts Arrest Screening Tool for Law Enforcement (MASTLE) is an objective, validated screening tool to be used by commanding officers. It provides a research-based measure of the likelihood that a youth who committed an offense will be rearrested in the near future or will fail to appear for arraignment if formally processed. Currently, the decision to arrest involves a significant amount of discretion and subjectivity. Police do not, and cannot, arrest for all violations of the law. Although this practice of discretion is essential to effective law enforcement, it may not always lead to consistent and impartial application. Departments can adopt the MASTLE, adjust it for site-specific applicability, or use its development as a guide to make their own. The tool has been validated for its accuracy. It is currently being piloted for use as part of a comprehensive juvenile assessment program.

- Enable departments to track data supporting their decisions, and
- Offer a concrete method for giving the public confidence that juvenile detention decisions are being made objectively.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTLE?

The Massachusetts Arrest Screening Tool for Law Enforcement (MASTLE) is an objective, screening tool validated in Massachusetts jurisdictions that assesses the likelihood a youth taken into police custody for a criminal offense will be arrested again or will fail to appear for arraignment. This information will allow police supervisors and commanders to make appropriate pre-processing decisions based on the presence of youths' risk factors; such as, whether to hold youth in pre-arraignment detention at the police station or to divert youth away from formal arrest.

The MASTLE is a valid measure of youths' risk of rearrest or failure to appear for both girls and boys. It was also tested across racial and ethnic groups (White, African-American, and Hispanic) and designed to account for differences in the factors that predict re-arrest. Therefore, an added benefit of using this tool is that it promotes consistency in police processing decisions across most youth.

The applicable risk factors are rated and "added up" into a total "risk" score. The risk score does not say whether a person will or won't be rearrested or fail to appear for arraignment. It does, however, represent how much of a risk the person is: The higher the score, the greater the risk for rearrest or failure to

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A TOOL LIKE THE MASTLE?

Use of a tool like the MASTLE can:

- Increase an officers' confidence in their decision to arrest,
- Hold the department accountable for making the right decisions by implementing structured decision-making based on research,
- Save time and resources by diverting low-risk adolescents, who may be better served by alternative interventions, away from the harmful effects of arrest,

appear for arraignment (the risks are calculated separately). This allows for law enforcement to facilitate and manage pre-arraignment detention and booking decisions using objective, standardized empirical data. The items were selected based on what years of research revealed about the prediction of delinquent behaviors.

WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED?

The MASTLE can be completed in approximately 15 minutes with information that includes address and length of residence, family background, juvenile record, and prior contact with law enforcement. This includes a record review as well as a brief discussion with the youth and, if at all possible, a parent or caregiver to obtain some information needed to rate items on the tool.

HOW CAN THE MASTLE BE IMPLEMENTED?

The MASTLE is intended for use by an experienced, senior officer in a position of command. It should be completed in a controlled setting (for example, the police station). The MASTLE is intended for use after the youth is taken into police custody but before the youth is processed (before the youth is booked and fingerprinted). However, it can occur at any point in the police detention process. Police departments should develop and implement a policy about how the MASTLE will be completed, as well as how it will be used in decisions to a) divert youth away from formal processing, and b) place youth in pre-arraignment detention.

This tool is best suited for agencies that serve a diverse community, have an interest in providing appropriate assistance and service to juveniles, and have access to juvenile offender records and records management system information. Much of the policy for use should be standard operating procedure for command personnel whose duties and responsibilities involve pre-arraignment

detention and discharge decisions. When making the decision to release an arrestee after booking they must consider whether there is a risk of flight and a risk to public safety by way of reoffending. If the risks are too great, a subject is held or bail is set.

CAN THE MASTLE BE USED IN THE FIELD?

The MASTLE may be used in the field prior to arrest to determine if arrest, transport, and processing are necessary IF information for completing the MASTLE can be accessed in the field. Field use would require consultation with a parent or prominent caregiver, electronic access to record information, as well as strict supervisory oversight and review. A policy delineating proper release and referral from the field is suggested in departments that meet these parameters.

NECESSARY RESOURCES AND AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE

Resources associated with implementation are minimal. The manual and MASTLE are free by request from the National Youth Screening and Assessment Partners' (NYSAP) website:

<http://www.NYSAP.us>

A review of the entire MASTLE manual by the commanding officer(s) is essential. Law enforcement agencies wishing to utilize the tool are required to register with NYSAP by:

- providing a key contact person,
- certify that they meet the minimum requirements (which includes existence of an electronic record keeping system), and
- sign an MOU for data-sharing.

Formal training on the tool is not required but is available by contacting NYSAP via the website.

