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| **From:** | Anne Milgram |
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**Contact:** Leila Walsh
(713) 554-1941
lwalsh@arnoldfoundation.org

**Laura and John Arnold Foundation announces new pilot sites for court risk assessment tool**

NEW YORK, NY – Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) today announced the latest jurisdictions to pilot the Public Safety Assessment-Court (PSA-Court) pretrial risk assessment tool: four counties and one city in **Arizona** (Gila, Mohave, Pinal, and Yuma Counties; and Mesa City)**; Santa Cruz County, California;** and **Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.** In addition, several judges in various counties in **Colorado** will also use the tool. The instrument is designed to help judges determine which defendants pose a risk to public safety and should be detained while they await trial, and which do not and can safely be released. The PSA-Court is already being used statewide in **Kentucky**, and LJAF plans to implement the tool in additional jurisdictions in the coming months.

"Risk assessments are a powerful resource to help judges make pretrial decisions," LJAF Vice President of Criminal Justice Anne Milgram explained. "The PSA-Court is the first tool of its kind to measure the risk of violence, and with continued use, we believe this will help reduce crime, increase public safety, and ensure that the criminal justice system operates as fairly and cost-effectively as possible."

"Improving criminal justice at the pretrial stage is a vital component of Arizona's plan to ensure that we incarcerate only those who should remain in jail before they have had a trial and that others are released on terms and conditions that will ensure public safety," said Rebecca Berch, Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. "Those who do not threaten public safety and will appear for trial should not remain in jail simply because they cannot afford bail. Evidence-based pretrial practices, including the use of a validated instrument for determining which defendants should be released – and which detained – play an important part in furthering this goal. Providing judges with objective data about the risk posed by each defendant allows us to make more effective, evidence-based decisions to protect the public, treat defendants fairly, and control costs – all of which help serve the citizens of our state."

LJAF developed the PSA-Court after research showed that a large percentage of high-risk defendants are released from jail while low-risk defendants are often detained. A data-driven risk assessment can help communities protect the public and spend less on pretrial incarceration. Currently, the nation spends $9 billion a year to hold defendants before trial.

"The early decisions about release and detention, which a judge must usually make with limited and highly subjective information, are among the most critical made by the judiciary, with significant impacts on community safety and fairness to the accused," said Judge David Prince, Deputy Chief Judge for the Fourth Judicial District of Colorado. "This pilot study is a substantial step forward in improving the quality of these decisions by informing them with objective and meaningful data."

The PSA-Court analyzes nine factors, based largely on a defendant's criminal history, that are

considered to be the strongest predictors of risk. It then produces a statistical analysis of the likelihood that a defendant will commit a new act of violence, commit a new crime, or fail to appear for a court hearing.

"Santa Cruz County is very pleased to be selected by LJAF to pilot and implement the PSA-Court within our Pretrial Services program," said William Penny, Adult Division Director of the Santa Cruz County Probation Department. "Since the development of our Pretrial Services program in 2006, we have built a solid foundation and capacity for continued growth of research-based practices in the field of pretrial and alternatives to custody. This project will allow us to utilize a more predictive, new generation pretrial risk assessment, that is also predictive of violence, and it will help us serve as an ongoing model for other California jurisdictions that are implementing or enhancing pretrial services. Our goal is to ensure that we make risk-based decisions to enhance public safety and reserve limited jail beds for the highest risk individuals."

The risk scores generated by the PSA-Court, in conjunction with a judge's knowledge of the facts and circumstances of the case and defendant, will guide decisions about release, detention, and supervision in the pretrial phase.

"Mecklenburg County's criminal justice leaders have a long history of working together to identify and adopt evidence-based practices that improve public safety and make efficient use of resources," said Thomas Eberly, Criminal Justice Director for the Mecklenburg County Manager's Office. "Adopting the PSA-Court is the latest example of that approach – and one that we anticipate having great benefits to our community."

More information on the development of the PSA-Court is available on LJAF's website.

Jurisdictions interested in the PSA-Court can request more information here.

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**About Laura and John Arnold Foundation**

Laura and John Arnold Foundation is private foundation that currently focuses its strategic investments on criminal justice, education, public accountability, and research integrity. LJAF has offices in Houston and New York City.

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