

WHAT IS EBDM?

Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) is a strategic and deliberate method of applying empirical knowledge and research-supported principles to justice system decisions made at the case, agency, and system level. The initiative team developed the EBDM framework, which posits that public safety outcomes will be improved when justice system stakeholders engage in truly collaborative partnerships, use research to guide their work, and work together to achieve safer communities, more efficient use of tax dollars, and fewer victims.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING?

Evidence-based decision making should occur throughout the justice system's decision points. The following are some examples of using research to guide decisions:

- Law enforcement uses objective data to inform citation/release decisions.
- Prosecutors, defenders, and judges use risk information to determine if pretrial release is appropriate, and use need assessment data to identify individualized risk reduction strategies for those who are sentenced.
- Jail staff provide reentry programming and community corrections staff supervise individuals based upon risk level and provide services designed to reduce risk of reoffense.
- County commissioners and executives fund programs that research has demonstrated to be effective in reducing risk — and eliminate programs that research has proven to be ineffective.

WHAT IS NIC'S ROLE IN EBDM?

NIC has served as a leader in justice system policy and reform since its establishment by Congress in 1974. Over two decades ago, NIC embraced the body of research that demonstrated that offender behavior can be changed if research-supported principles and practices are implemented properly. Ever since, NIC has been assisting justice system professionals to implement these strategies. In 2008, NIC developed the EBDM framework to describe a process and method to comprehensively implement justice system reform. Thereafter, NIC identified and supported seven communities throughout the U.S. to pilot the framework. NIC provided guidance and technical assistance and, based upon the success in these seven communities, in 2015 expanded its work to 21 teams in three states, including three state-level policymaking teams. As a trusted entity with insightful resources and research, NIC is an ideal partner for justice systems seeking meaningful reform in their systems.

HOW DOES NIC WORK WITH LOCAL SYSTEMS TO INTEGRATE EBDM?

NIC recognizes that justice system officials are the leaders of their own reform efforts. With this in mind, NIC, in partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy, offers guidance and technical assistance to implement EBDM. Their support helps local and state leaders achieve improved justice system outcomes: reductions in pretrial misconduct and post-conviction offending that result in fewer victims and safer communities.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN EBDM?

For justice reform to truly work, every stakeholder needs to be involved. This approach moves justice system agencies from working in isolation to working collaboratively, and from focusing on agency-specific goals to overall system outcomes that benefit the entire community and all of its stakeholders. By including all stakeholders in the process, EBDM-based justice reform will produce better outcomes and result in both improved safety and a more cost-effective use of tax dollars.

WHAT RESULTS HAS EBDM PRODUCED SO FAR?

The pilot sites have reported multiple benefits to their local justice systems since they have instituted EBDM-based justice reform. For example:

- In Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, recidivism rates have fallen by nearly half and felony case filings have increased as prosecutors, judges, and others have been able to focus on serious crimes as a result of the diversion of low-risk, first-time offenders.
- In the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, probation completion rates are up to 79.1 percent from 71.8 percent the previous year, and there is an 11 percent decrease in jail bed days for violations.
- In Mesa County, Colorado, the local jail's pretrial population has decreased by 27 percent and failures to appear in court have been reduced by more than 50 percent.