



ADULT RE-OFFENSE RISK ASSESSMENT (ARRA)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FORENSIC
COUNSELORS

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Introduction

The Adult Re-offense Risk Assessment (ARRA) is a risk assessment scale for adult male non-sexual offenders age 18 and older. The ARRA was designed to assist clinical staff, as well as criminal justice personnel in making treatment decisions and intensity of supervision needs. It is acknowledged that the ARRA does not provide a comprehensive survey of all possible risk factors relevant to criminal acting out, it is therefore best utilized as a decision making aid combined with professional judgment and other assessment tools. The ARRA should be considered an experimental instrument and is the subject of ongoing research to improve its reliability and predictive validity.

As with any clinical assessment, it is important for the assessor to obtain informed consent from the offender. It is strongly recommended that client assessment as to his or her risk of re-offending should only be done post-adjudication, but prior to sentencing. **IF YOU ARE REQUESTED BY THE COURT TO PROVIDE A RISK ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO ADJUDICATION DECLINE THE REQUEST. IT IS NOT THE PURPOSE OF ANY ASSESSMENT TO DETERMINE GUILT OR INNOCENSE.**

Description

The ARRA is composed of 22 items, 14 static risk factors, and 8 dynamic risk factors associated with re-offending. The interaction of static and dynamic factors are considered important factors for determining an offender's overall risk level. Most items concern the offender's history, and, as such are unchangeable. Eight items are dynamic in nature, and therefore have the potential for changing over time. Empirically guided clinical judgment was used to assign weights to each scale item based upon their importance in predicting re-offending and are still being studied. As of present we have not been able to gather sufficient data to examine the accuracy of the item weights, and therefore do not consider the ARRA an actuarial instrument, but rather an experimental instrument.

The ARRA risk categories can be used to determine treatment and supervision decisions. Those offenders scoring in the LOW range of 1-15 are generally considered appropriate for counseling, treatment and community supervision. Offenders scoring in the MODERATE range of 16-20 will require the clinician to use their clinical judgment as to the offenders appropriateness for treatment and community supervision. For those offenders scoring in the HIGH range of 21-47 incarceration or comprehensive community supervision is generally recommended for the protection of the public.

The ARRA at the present time is not an actuarial scale. Although we would like to provide the user of the ARRA with probabilistic estimates for criminal acting out and re-offending, we lack adequate data as of present on a sufficiently large enough re-offending population to provide statistically valid estimates. The ARRA at the present time is not an actuarial scale, but rather it is an empirically informed guide for the assessment of a consistent set of factors that may possibly replicate an increased risk to re-offend.

User Qualifications

The ARRA was designed to be scored easily by mental health professionals and criminal justice personnel. ARRA examiners should have a understanding of static, dynamic and protective factors related to criminal re-offending and be specialists in the assessment and treatment of criminal offenders. When assessing the risk of an offender, the stakes are high. As forensic professionals we have a huge burden of responsibility, because the decisions based on our assessments could have a profound impact upon the individual that was assessed, as well as the community at large. A high risk individual assessed as being low risk would not be protecting the public from harm, as well as low risk individuals assessed as being high risk could result in life altering consequences for them.

Psychometric Properties of the ARRA

The initial study in the development of the ARRA was composed of 352 male offenders age 18 - 47. Approximately one half of these offenders were incarcerated and the remaining half were supervised in the community. The study attempted to establish validity between the ARRA risk levels of high, moderate and low, and the clinical judgments of a subject matter expert panel made up of 13 clinicians specializing in the treatment of offenders was utilized. The subject matter experts reviewed each and every file of the 352 male sample and rated those offenders that they considered to be appropriate candidates for community supervision as opposed to those offenders they judged to require incarceration. The subject matter experts then determined each participant's ARRA score placing them on a scoring grid. The subject matter experts then divided the grid into three sections designated high, low and moderate. The low and moderate risk scores were deemed to be appropriate for counseling and community supervision, and the high risk scores were believed to be in need of incarceration or strict supervision in order to protect the public. The panel of subject matter experts appropriately assigned 96.8% of the studied cases.

The ARRA demonstrated significant correlations with self-reported criminal history variables including number of violent/non-violent offenses and number of times in jail/prison/detention for male offenders. The ARRA also was significantly related to numerous self-reported criminal, familial, and substance use history variables (e.g., past physical and sexual abuse) among adult male offenders.

Scoring Instructions

The ARRA is for use with male offenders 18 or older who have been convicted of at least one offense. Each item is scored 1, 2, or 3. If there is no evidence to score the item during a clinical interview, or the item does not apply it is to be scored 0.

If scoring is strictly from a file review and information is lacking or is not clear, it should be assumed the risk factor does not exist and should be given the lowest score of 0.

The following scoring guidelines may be used to estimate an offender's risk level. Low Risk (LR) 1-15, Moderate Risk (MR) 16-20 High Risk (HR) 21-47

STATIC RISK FACTORS

1. Offender under twenty five years old. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if offender is under age twenty five

2. Offender has been previously convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if offender has been convicted of any previous offenses including juvenile offenses. Do not include index offense.

3. Offender used a weapon, i.e., gun, knife, or any threatening object in the present offense or any previous offenses. _____

RULE: Score 3 points if the offender used a weapon during the index or any previous crime.

4. Victim needed medical assistance. _____

RULE: Score 3 points if the victim of the present index offense or any previous offenses needed medical assistance as a result of the offense.

5. There is evidence of early life physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of any early life abuse prior to age 16.

6. There is evidence within the record that the client was previously arrested for a felony or misdemeanor but not adjudicated. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if official records indicate that the offender was arrested for a felony or misdemeanor but not adjudicated. Score 3 points if non-adjudicated offense was violence related, domestic violence, bullying, assault, battery, etc.

7. There is evidence within the official records that the offender has violated previous parole or probation attempts. _____

RULE: Score 3 points if the record indicates the offender has been previously granted parole or probation, and has violated the conditions of probation or parole as an adult or as a juvenile.

8. There is evidence within official records that the client was raised in a single parent household. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if there is evidence that the offender was raised by one parent regardless of parental gender.

9. There is evidence of a family history of alcoholism/abuse or substance abuse. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of alcohol or drug abuse within the offender's family system including parents, grandparents.

10. There is evidence of negative educational experiences. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of truancy, failing grades or client dropped out of school. Score 3 points if ever suspended for fighting.

11. There is evidence within the record that the offender was previously diagnosed as suffering from a learning disability. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if the client was diagnosed by a psychologist or school guidance counselor as being learning disabled, or client was placed into a special education program/classes.

12. There is evidence of previous treatment or counseling attempts. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if the client has been in a previous treatment or counseling program.

13. There is evidence that the offender has been divorced. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if the offender is divorced from a single marriage. Score 2 points if the offender has been divorced more than once.

14. There is evidence that the offender served in the military. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if the offender was dishonorably discharged.

DYNAMIC FACTORS

15. Client has a poor attitude. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if the client presents with a poor attitude or is highly resistant.

16. There is evidence from the record of alcohol abuse. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of driving under the influence, medical records, or participation in a alcohol treatment program. Score 3 points if the offender is presently abusing alcohol.

17. There is evidence of drug abuse. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of illegal drug usage or abuse of prescription drug abuse. Score 3 points if presently using drugs.

18. There is evidence that the offender socializes with negative peers. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence that the offender socializes with others that are involved in alcohol/ drug abuse or committing crimes.

19. The offender is presently unemployed or not in school. _____

RULE: Score 1 point if the offender is presently unemployed. Score 2 points if the official record indicates frequent job changes or chronic unemployment.

20. The offender utilizes denial involving his/her offense. _____

RULE: Score 2 points if the client denies his/her present or past offenses.

21. The offender lacks appropriate social skills.

RULE: Score 2 points if there is evidence of poor social skills such as inability to maintain an intimate relationship, make friends, etc.

22. Offender lacks empathy. _____

RULE: The offender shows no feelings of guilt, remorse or shame as to how his/her acting out behaviors have affected others and there victim. Demonstrates the inability as to how the victim may feel. Score 2 points.

TOTAL SCORE: _____

RISK LEVEL: _____

We do appreciate feedback from users about areas of uncertainty and ways to increase clarity and accuracy. We are available to answer questions concerning the use of the ARRA, as well as any updates on validity studies.

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