

## AJA Behavioral Health Screening and Assessments in Jail Survey

### Methodology and Toplines

This survey was designed and analyzed by public opinion researchers at The Pew Charitable Trusts in collaboration with the American Jail Association (AJA) and was conducted from May 21, 2023, to Feb. 28, 2024. The purpose was to better understand the extent to which jails can identify people with mental health and substance use issues. To do so, the survey was disseminated to U.S. jail administrators through the AJA via Qualtrics. There are more than 3,116 local jails in the United States, plus an additional 80 jails located on Native American reservations and operated by tribal authorities or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Pew survey received responses from 100 facilities, approximately 3% of jails. The sample size does not lend itself to broad determinations about jails and behavioral health assessments but it does provide an important snapshot of how these tools may be deployed and can give jail administrators a glimpse into how other administrators throughout the country are managing screenings and assessments and how to best use them.

In total, 1,441 individuals were invited using email addresses obtained from the AJA. The survey was self-administered in Qualtrics; because of the nature of the questions, links to the survey were potentially forwarded to other personnel to answer the survey. Because of issues with the email lists, such as staff turnover and email bounce backs, researchers looked for additional personnel or email addresses of those who could take the survey. The data was cleaned to remove incomplete responses (those with 50% or fewer questions answered), and the final sample size is 100 people.

This survey was sent to all AJA jail administrators and was not weighted. Because this population may not be all jails in the United States and because of the low response rate, results cannot be generalized. All forms of survey research are subject to unmeasured error that cannot be eliminated, including coverage error, sampling error, nonresponse error, measurement error, and data processing and editing error. Incentives were not offered to respondents for completion of the survey.

For questions regarding the survey, please contact Hillary Gore at [hgore@pewtrusts.org](mailto:hgore@pewtrusts.org).

### Toplines

This survey is a collaborative research project between the American Jail Association (AJA) and The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew), a nonpartisan, nongovernmental independent nonprofit organization. The purpose of this survey is to better understand the extent to which jails are able to identify people with mental health and substance use issues. If you are not familiar with your facility's screening and assessment practices, please forward this survey to a staff member who is.

Q1. First, we would like to ask for information about your facility. We ask for your jail's information to ensure responses are spread across the country, and to see whether there are patterns in responses – for example, jails in rural versus urban areas.

Again, **your response will remain confidential**; findings will only be presented in aggregate.

Please indicate your state and facility name below.

State

Facility Name

Q1a. If your facility was not listed, please enter it below.

### **SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

Now, we would like to discuss if and how your jail identifies **mental health** issues.

Throughout this survey, we use **“screening”** to mean a brief, routine process to identify indicators - “flags” - for the presence of mental health and/or substance use issues that reflect an individual’s need for treatment and/or an alternative setting or situation. Screening may include a brief interview, use of self-report instruments, or a review of prior records.

We use **“assessment”** to indicate a clinical interview that may include psychological, laboratory, or other testing. Assessments are usually conducted by a trained professional who is either licensed or certified to provide mental health and substance use treatment services.

Q2. Who is **screened** for mental health issues at your jail?

	Frequency	Percentage
Everyone	88	88%
Some people, based on perceived need for mental health screening	10	10%
No one	1	1%
Skipped	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

Q3. [If Q2= “Everyone” or “Some people”] When are people usually **screened** for mental health issues? Select all that apply.

	Frequency	Percentage
At admission	86	87.76%
Within 24 hours of admission	21	21.43%
Between 1 and 7 days after admission	16	16.33%
Within 24 hours of any system transfer or processing (like pretrial and presentence hearings, sentencing, release)	7	7.14%

Between 1 and 7 days after any system transfer or processing (like pretrial and presentence hearings, sentencing, release)	5	5.10%		
Other			10	10.20%
<b>Total</b>			98	

Q4. [If Q2 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] Is the mental health screening part of a larger health or risk screening, or do you use a stand-alone mental health screener?

	Frequency	Percentage
Part of a larger health or risk screening . If known, please provide the name of the screening tool:	51	52.04%
Stand-alone mental health screener. If known, please provide the name of the screening tool:	20	20.41%
Skipped	27	27.55%
<b>Total</b>	98	100.00%

Q5. [If Q2 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] Who usually administers mental health **screenings**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Healthcare, social work, treatment, or other clinical staff employed by the jail	19	19.39%
Other correctional, non-clinical staff employed by the jail	35	35.71%
Contracted healthcare, treatment, or clinical staff	36	36.73%
Someone not employed or contracted by the jail	3	3.06%
Other:	2	2.04%
Skipped	3	3.06%
<b>Total</b>	98	100.00%

Q6. If you have any comments about **mental health screenings**, please enter below:

Q7. When a screening or prior records identifies that a person may have mental health issues, do you administer a **mental health assessment**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	80%
No	10	10%
Sometimes. Please describe when a person with a positive mental health screening would receive an assessment	10	10%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

Q8. [If Q7 = “Yes” or “Sometimes”] Who usually administers mental health **assessments**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Healthcare, social work, treatment, or other clinical staff employed by the jail	28	31.11%
Other correctional, non-clinical staff employed by the jail	5	5.56%
Contracted healthcare, treatment, or clinical staff	53	58.89%
Someone not employed or contracted by the jail	2	2.22%
Other:	2	2.22%
<b>Total</b>	90	100.00%

Q9. If you have any comments about **mental health assessments**, please enter below:

Q10. How is screening and/or assessment information on mental health used? Select all that apply.

	Frequency	Percentage
To determine eligibility for diversion to non-jail settings	33	33%
To determine placement in the facility	89	89%
For treatment planning in jail	84	84%
To determine conditions of custody	55	55%
To determine medical care that may be needed	90	90%
To assist in release planning	58	58%
Other	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	100	

#### **SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT FOR SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES**

Finally, we would like to know if and how your jail identifies **substance use** issues. Again, “screening” means a brief, routine process to identify indicators for the presence of substance use issues, such as a brief interview, use of self-report instruments, or a review of prior records. An “assessment” is a more extensive clinical interview that may include clinical, laboratory, or other testing.

Q11. Who is **screened** for substance use issues at your jail?

	Frequency	Percentage
Everyone	86	86%
Some people, based on perceived need for substance screening	12	12%
No one	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

Q12. [If Q11 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] When are people usually **screened** for substance use issues? Select all that apply.

	Frequency	Percentage
At admission	86	87.76%
Within 24 hours of admission	22	22.45%
Between 1 and 7 days after admission	21	21.42%
Within 24 hours of any system transfer or processing (like pretrial and presentence hearings, sentencing, release)	5	5.10%
Between 1 and 7 days after any system transfer or processing (like pretrial and presentence hearings, sentencing, release)	4	4.08%
Skipped	2	2.04%
Other	7	7.14%
<b>Total</b>	98	

Q13. [If Q11 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] Is the substance use screening part of a larger health or risk screening, or do you use a stand-alone substance use screener?

	Frequency	Percentage
Part of a larger health or risk screening. If known, please provide the name of the screening tool	55	56.12%
Stand-alone substance use screener. If known, please provide the name of the screening tool	11	11.22%
Skipped	32	32.65%
<b>Total</b>	98	100.00%

Q14. [If Q11 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] Please indicate which of the following your substance use **screening** covers: (Select all that apply.)

	Frequency	Percentage
Any substance use disorder	93	94.88%
Alcohol use disorder	55	56.12%
Opioid use disorder	49	50.00%
Stimulant use disorder (including cocaine, methamphetamine, or other amphetamines)	48	48.98%
Other disorders involving illegal or non-prescribed drugs	45	45.92%
Skipped	1	1.02%
<b>Total</b>	98	

Q15. [If Q11 = “Everyone” or “Some people”] Who usually administers substance use **screenings**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Healthcare, social work, treatment, or clinical staff employed by the jail	27	27.55%
Other correctional, non-clinical staff employed by the jail	29	29.59%
Contracted healthcare, treatment, or clinical staff	35	35.71%
Someone not employed or contracted by the jail	3	3.06%
Other:	4	4.08%
<b>Total</b>	98	100.00%

Q16. If you have any comments about **substance use screenings**, please enter below:

Q17. When a screening or prior records identifies that a person may have substance use issues, do you administer a **substance use assessment**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	62
No	16	16
Sometimes. Please describe when a person with a positive substance use screening would receive an assessment:	17	17
Skipped	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

Q18. [If Q17 = “Yes” or “Sometimes”] Who usually administers substance use **assessments**?

	Frequency	Percentage
Healthcare, social work, treatment, or clinical staff employed by the jail	31	39.24%
Other correctional, nonclinical staff employed by the jail	5	6.33%
Contracted healthcare, treatment, or clinical staff	39	49.37%
Someone not employed or contracted by the jail	3	3.80%
Other	1	1.27%
<b>Total</b>	79	100.00%

Q19. If you have any comments about **substance use assessments**, please enter below:

Q20. How is screening and/or assessment information on substance use used? Select all that apply.

	Frequency	Percentage
To determine eligibility for diversion to non-jail settings	32	32.00%

To determine placement in the facility	68	68.00%
For treatment planning in jail	84	84.00%
To determine conditions of custody	43	43.88%
To determine medical care that may be needed	88	88.00%
To assist in release planning	56	56.00%
Skipped	3	3.00%
<b>Total</b>	100	

Q21. What is your title or role at the facility?

Q22. Are you willing to participate in a short interview with Pew staff regarding behavioral health screening and assessment in your jail? Your participation and personal information would be kept confidential.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes. (Please provide your email address below.)	44	44%
No	49	49%
Skipped	7	7%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%