

Native offender substance abuse assessment: The Computerized Lifestyle Assessment Instrument (R-37, 1994)

This report focuses on the appropriateness of the use of the Computerized Lifestyle Assessment Instrument (CLAI) with Native offenders. Potential differences in CLAI results for Native and non-Native offenders were examined by assessing the CLAI's primary alcohol and drug screening instruments: the Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS) and the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST).

Additional analyses were performed on data from 855 Native offenders who had completed the CLAI as part of the routine intake assessment process. Approximately 75% of these Native offenders were assessed as having alcohol problems of sufficient severity to warrant some level of treatment intervention.

The results of this study's analysis support the conclusion that the CLAI is an appropriate assessment system for administration to Native offenders to identify the extent and nature of their substance abuse problems for at least two important reasons. First, there was a high degree of consistency in the psychometric structure of the CLAI's individual drug and alcohol screening measures when samples of Native and non-Native offenders were compared. Second, there were consistent patterns and relationships in Native offender responses to the screening measures and other CLAI items related to offenders' present drug and alcohol-taking behaviour, their past substance abuse behaviour and their criminal behaviour.

The research failed to unearth patterns in either the structure of the substance abuse screening or anomalies in other key variables relating to substance abuse and criminal behaviour which would prompt questioning the use of the CLAI with Native offenders.

The results support the ability of an automated self-report system to generate reliable and interpretable information about offender substance abuse problems, regardless of whether the offenders are Native or non-Native, and the fact that the CLAI system is better able to identify offenders having substance abuse problems as compared with approaches reliant on information from offenders' institutional files.