



Offender Assessment Index



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Scale Interpretation Offender Assessment Index

Scale Description

Scale Interpretation

Test Features

Applications

- For adult courts and pre-sentence investigation
- Family and adult drug courts
- Adult (male and female) probation departments
- Adult assessment, counseling and treatment agencies/providers
- Adult community corrections

The Offender Assessment Index (OAI) is designed for adult (misdemeanor and felony) court use. The OAI consists of 158 items and takes 35 minutes to complete. OAI's are computer scored on-site with reports printed in 2½ minutes. The OAI contains 7 scales (measures): 1. Truthfulness Scale, 2. Violence Scale, 3. Alcohol Scale, 4. Drugs Scale, 5. Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale, 6. Resistance Scale and 7. Stress Coping Abilities Scale.

Seven OAI Scales (Measures)

- 1. Truthfulness Scale:** measures the truthfulness of the defendant while completing the OAI. This scale identifies denial, defensiveness, problem minimization and attempts to “fake good.”
- 2. Violence Scale:** measures a person’s tendency to injure, damage or destroy. Characterized by cruelty, excessive force, coercion and brutality. This scale identifies dangerous people.
- 3. Alcohol Scale:** measures the severity of alcohol use or abuse. Alcohol refers to beer, wine and other liquors.
- 4. Drugs Scale:** measures the severity of drug (marijuana, crack, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, heroin, etc.) use and abuse.
- 5. Substance Abuse / Dependency Scale:** utilizes DSM-IV criteria to classify substance (alcohol/ drugs) abuse or dependency. This is a classification, not a measurement scale.
- 6. Resistance Scale:** measures defensiveness, non-compliance, uncooperativeness and oppositional attitudes and behavior. This scale varies directly with the defendant’s attitude and behavior.
- 7. Stress Coping Abilities Scale:** measures the defendant’s ability to cope effectively with stress. Stress exacerbates emotional problems.

INTERPRETATION

There are several levels of Offender Assessment Index (OAI) interpretation ranging from viewing the OAI as a self-report to interpreting scale elevations and inter-relationships.

The following table is a beginning point for interpreting OAI scores.

SCALE RANGES

Risk Category	Risk Range Percentile	Total Percentage
Low Risk	0 - 39%	39%
Medium Risk	40 - 69%	30%
Problem Risk	70 - 89%	20%
Severe Problem	90 - 100%	11%

With reference to the above table, a problem is not identified until a scale score is at the 70th percentile or higher. Elevated scale scores refer to percentile scores that are at

or above the 70th percentile. Severe problems are identified by scale scores at or above the 90th percentile. Severe problems represent the highest 11 percent of defendants evaluated with the OAI. The OAI has been standardized (normed) on adult court defendants.

SCALE INTERPRETATION

Offender, or more specifically, defendant assessment is complex, involving clinical considerations (victim and alleged perpetrator), concerns about harm to others and legal issues. Such evaluations should incorporate record review, interview and test results. No decision should be based solely upon test results. Yet, the OAI objectively measures a variety of attitudes and behaviors that are important for understanding defendants.

Truthfulness Scale: measures how truthful the defendant was while completing the OAI. This scale identifies denial, defensiveness, problem minimization, attempts to “fake good” and lying. **Truthfulness Scale scores at or below the 89th percentile mean that all other OAI scale scores are accurate.** When the Truthfulness Scale score is in the 70 to 89th percentile range other OAI scales are accurate because they have been Truth-Corrected. In contrast, when the Truthfulness Scale score is at or above the 90th percentile this means that all OAI scales are inaccurate (invalid) because the defendant was defensive, overly guarded, was minimizing problems or was caught faking answers. If not consciously deceptive, defendants with severely inaccurate Truthfulness Scale scores are uncooperative, fail to understand OAI items or feel a need to appear in a good light. Elevated Truthfulness Scale scores do not occur by chance. One of the first things to do when reviewing an OAI report is to check the Truthfulness Scale score. The Truthfulness Scale score can be interpreted independently. Truthfulness Scale scores override all other OAI scale scores.

Violence Scale: identifies defendants that are dangerous to themselves and others. Violence is aggression in its most extreme and unacceptable form. Elevated scorers can be demanding, sensitive to perceived criticism, and insightful concerning how they express their anger and hostility. Scorers in the 70th to 89th percentile range manifest adjustment and people problems. They often present as resentful, annoyed, offended and angry. **Severe problem (90 to 100th percentile scores) scorers should not be ignored as they can be threatening, intimidating and dangerous.**

A particularly unstable and perilous situation involves an elevated Violence Scale score with an elevated Alcohol or Drugs Scale score. Substance (alcohol and other drugs) abuse can cloud judgment and serves as a triggering or release mechanism. Similarly, elevated Resistance Scale scorers and/or Stress Coping Abilities scorers with severe Violence Scale scorers can be particularly problematic. Elevated Resistance and Violence Scale scorers often become unruly, insubordinate, reactionary and abusive. Impaired Stress Coping Abilities in a violence prone individual can exacerbate violent tendencies. In these situations emotions become unpredictable and explosive.

Although scale elevations can help in understanding defendants, the height of these scale scores is important. The more OAI scale scores in the severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) range – the more disruptive and violent the defendant becomes. A severe problem Violence Scale score is a malignant sign with or without other scale elevations. The Violence Scale can be interpreted independently or in combination with other OAI scales.

Alcohol Scale: measures alcohol (beer, wine and other liquors) use and the severity of abuse. An elevated (70 to 89th percentile) alcohol Scale score is indicative of an emerging drinking problem. For this defendant, drinking is problematic. Alcohol Scale scores in the severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) range identify serious drinking problems.

Since a history of alcohol problems could result in an abstainer (current non-drinker) attaining a low to medium-risk score, precautions have been built-into the OAI to correctly identify “recovering alcoholics.” **The defendants answer to the “recovery question” (item #152) is printed on the last page of the OAI report for easy reference.** In addition, elevated Alcohol Scale paragraphs caution staff to establish if the defendant is a recovering alcoholic. Other Alcohol Scale items (direct admissions) are printed as “significant items” when they are admitted to.

Severely elevated Alcohol and Drugs Scale scores indicate polysubstance abuse and the highest score usually identifies the defendant’s substance of choice. Alcohol Scale scores in the severe (90 to 100th percentile) problem range often exacerbate or magnify behaviors associated with other elevated scale scores – particularly when the defendant has been drinking. Elevated alcohol and Violence Scale scores are a malignant prognostic sign. Resistance is typically magnified in defendants with elevated alcohol scale scores.

The Alcohol Scale score can be interpreted independently or in combination with other OAI scales. Substance (alcohol and other drugs) abuse is a common factor found in many defendants problematic situations. Its ubiquitous presence means that substance abuse is a meaningful area of inquiry in defendant screening.

Drugs Scale: measures illicit drug use and the severity of abuse. Drugs refer to marijuana, cocaine, crack, amphetamines, barbiturates, ecstasy, heroin, etc. In the OAI drugs usually refers to non-prescription drugs. An elevated (70 to 89th percentile) Drugs Scale score is indicative of an emerging drug problem. Scores in this range are problematic. A Drugs Scale score in the severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) range identifies defendants with serious drug problems.

Since a history of drug-related problems could result in an abstainer attaining a low to medium risk score, precautions have been built into the OAI to correctly identify “recovering drug abusers.” **The defendants answer to the “recovering question” (item**

#152) is printed on the last page of the OAI report for easy reference. In addition, elevated Drugs Scale paragraphs caution staff to establish if the defendant is a recovering drug abuser. Other Drugs Scale items (direct admission) are printed as “significant items” when a defendant admits to them.

An elevated (70 to 89th percentile and higher) Drugs Scale score in conjunction with other elevated scale scores magnifies the severity of the other elevated scores. For example, an elevated Drugs Scale score with an elevated Violence scale score increases the probability of violence. The higher these scores are the more likelihood of severe violence.

When both the Drugs Scale and the Alcohol Scale are elevated the higher score usually represents the defendant’s substance of choice. When both of these scales are in the severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) range polysubstance abuse is indicated.

The Drugs Scale score can help staff work through defendant’s denial. And when it is explained that the OAI is an objective test that has been standardized on thousands of defendants, denial and defensiveness often become noticeably less intense. Moreover, when it is explained that elevated scores do not occur by chance – but require a definite response pattern – many defendants then accept their objective and standardized assessment findings.

The Drugs Scale can be interpreted independently or in combination with other OAI scales. Usually when the Drugs Scale is elevated along with another elevated scale the interaction between scales is addressed.

Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale: classifies defendants as substance abusers, substance dependent or non-pathological substance users in accordance with Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Edition (DSM-IV) criteria. The OAI Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale is entirely based on DSM-IV classification criteria for substance abuse and substance dependency.

When a defendant admits to one of four DSM-IV abuse symptoms (criteria) that defendant is classified in the substance abuse category. When a defendant admits to three of the seven DSM-IV dependency symptoms (criteria) that defendant is classified in the substance dependency category.

There is an important difference between the OAI Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale and the OAI Alcohol Scale and Drugs Scale. The Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale **classifies** people as substance abusers and substance dependent. In contrast, the OAI Alcohol Scale and Drugs Scale **measure the severity** of alcohol and drug use or abuse.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASM) states there can be exceptions to DSM-IV classification – and these exceptions are made according to the **severity** of a person’s substance abuse. The severity of a person’s alcohol and/or drug abuse should determine their recommended level of intervention or treatment. In summary, the OAI Alcohol Scale and Drugs Scale measure **severity** of substance abuse, whereas the DSM-IV based Substance Abuse/Dependency Scale **classifies** people as substance abusers or substance dependent.

Resistance Scale: measures defendant uncooperativeness, defensiveness or the defendant’s resistance to others. This scale score varies directly with client’s attitudes.

An elevated (70 to 89th percentile) Resistance Scale score identifies defensive, non-compliant people with oppositional attitudes and behavior. These uncooperative defendants respond best to structure and clarification of expectations and consequences. Such defendants can be fault-finding and critical. A severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) Resistance Scale score reflects severe non-compliance, resistance and even defiance. Severe problem scorers are typically hostile, cooperate grudgingly and can be antagonistic. They tend to be unfriendly, alienated and spiteful. They are contrarian and their resistance impacts relationships, particularly authoritarian relationships.

Resistance is a character trait. In other words, we are referring to a resistant personality pattern characterized by uncooperative attitudes and behavior often with immaturity and rebelliousness as components. At the extreme this is a behavior pattern in which inappropriate non-compliance is dominant. Character traits are enduring aspects of a person’s personality. Alcohol and drugs can exacerbate the resistant attitudes and inappropriate behavior.

An elevated Truthfulness Scale can be anticipated in some resistant defendants. These defendants may not like being told to complete a test. The Resistance Scale can be interpreted independently of other OAI scales.

Stress Coping Abilities Scale: measures how well the defendant copes with stress. It is now known that stress exacerbates mental and emotional and mental problems. An elevated Stress Coping Abilities Scale score in conjunction with other elevated OAI scale scores helps explain the defendant’s situation. For example, when a person doesn’t handle stress well, other existing mental and emotional problems are exacerbated. This problem augmentation applies to violence, substance (alcohol and other drugs) abuse, resistance issues and stress-related problems.

An elevated (70 to 89th percentile) Stress Coping Abilities Scale score can also exacerbate or magnify emotional and mental health symptomatology. When a Stress Coping Abilities Scale score is in the severe problem (90 to 100th percentile) range it is likely that the defendant has a diagnosable mental health problem. In these instances referral to a certified or licensed mental health professional may be warranted for a

diagnosis, prognosis and treatment plan. Lower elevated scale scores suggest less intensive referral alternatives like a stress management program be considered.

If a defendant's Stress Coping Abilities Scale is impaired all other elevated scale scores would likely be magnified. For example, violence, substance (alcohol and other drugs) abuse, and resistance could be magnified or worsened. The Stress Coping Abilities Scale can be interpreted independently or in conjunction with other OAI scale.

Unique Features

Truthfulness Scale identifies denial, problem minimization and faking. It is now clear that many probationers attempt to minimize their problems. A Truthfulness Scale is now considered by many as a necessary component in contemporary probationer tests. The Offender Assessment Index Truthfulness Scale has been validated with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), polygraph exams, other tests, experienced staff judgment and truthfulness studies. The Truthfulness Scale has been demonstrated to be reliable, valid and accurate. In some respects the OAI Truthfulness Scale is similar to the MMPI's L and F-Scales. It consists of a number of items that most people agree or disagree with.

Truth-Corrected Scores have proven to be very important for assessment accuracy. The proprietary truth-correction program is comparable to the MMPI K-Scale correction. The OAI Truthfulness Scale has been correlated with the 6 other scales. The Truth-Correction equation then converts raw scores to truth-corrected scores. Truth-Corrected scores are more accurate than raw scores. Raw scores reflect what the client wants you to know. Truth-Corrected scores reveal what the client is trying to hide.

Violence (Lethality) Scale boils down to identifying people who are a danger to themselves and others. Violence is defined as "the expression of hostility and rage through physical force directed against persons or property." It is aggression in an extreme and unacceptable form, which is why the term "lethality" is included in parentheses. Measuring violence enables OAI users to identify people capable of harming themselves and others. Extremely violent (lethal) individuals score at or above the 90th percentile on the Violence (lethality) Scale and these people are dangerous. This is a very important, yet often overlooked behavior pattern.

Stress Coping Abilities Scale measures how well the probationer handles stress, tension and pressure. How well a person manages stress can effect their adjustment and mental health. We now know that stress exacerbates emotional and mental health problems. This scale is a non-introversive way to screen established (diagnosable) mental health problems. A probationer scoring at or above the 90th percentile on the Stress Coping Abilities Scale should be referred for a more comprehensive evaluation and diagnosis. This important area of inquiry is missed by other probationer screening tests.

More than just another alcohol or drug test. In addition to alcohol and drugs the OAI assesses other important areas of inquiry like truthfulness, denial and faking,

violence (lethality) proneness, antisocial attitudes, aggressiveness and stress coping abilities. It provides the information needed for understanding probationer attitudes and behavior.

Confidentiality: Professional Online Testing Solutions, Inc. encourages test users to delete probationer's names. Once probationer names are deleted they are gone and cannot be retrieved. Deleting probationer names does not delete demographics or test data, which is downloaded into the OAI database for subsequent analysis. This proprietary name deletion procedure involves a few keystrokes and insures client confidentiality. This "name deletion" procedure insures confidentiality and **compliance with HIPAA** (federal regulation 45 C.F.R. 164.501) requirements.

Test Data Input Verification allows the person that inputs test data from the answer sheet into the computer to verify the accuracy of their data input. In brief, test data is input twice and any inconsistencies between the first and second data entry are highlighted until corrected. When the first and second data entry match or are the same -- staff can continue. This proprietary Test Data Input Verification procedure is optional, yet it is strongly recommended.

Database. The Offender Assessment Index system contains a proprietary built-in database. All OAI test data is downloaded into the OAI database. This expanding database allows ongoing research and test program summary features that were not readily available before. Ongoing research insures quality control. Testing program summaries provide for program self-evaluation.

Built-in database. The OAI permits ongoing research and annual program summary -- at no additional cost. Advantages of this proprietary database are many and include database (research) analysis and annual testing program summary reports. Annual summary reports provide information that permit testing program review.

In conclusion, the topic of Offender Assessment Index (OAI) "Scale interpretation" has been briefly discussed. It should be noted that books could be written on each OAI scale and its interpretation. For more information on the OAI, interested parties are referred to the Behavior Data Systems, Ltd. Website **www.bdsltd.com**. Upon entering this site there are navigational links in the left margin of each webpage. Click on the "Tests Alphabetically Listed" link and scroll down to the Offender Assessment Index (OAI). Click on the test name and you will go directly to the OAI webpage.

For more in-depth Offender Assessment Index information visit www.bdsltd.com