Mesa County Criminal Justice System

Evidence Based Decision Making Initiative

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Evidence Based Decision Making Initiative

- ✓ **In June 2008, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) awarded the Center for Effective Public Policy, in partnership with the Pretrial Justice Institute, the Justice Management Institute, and The Carey Group, a cooperative agreement to address "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems."**

- ✓ **The goal of the initiative is to build a system wide framework (arrest through final disposition and discharge) that will result in more collaborative, evidence-based decision making and practices in local criminal justice systems.**

- ✓ **The initiative seeks to equip criminal justice policymakers in local communities with the information, processes, and tools that will result in measurable reductions of pretrial misconduct and post-conviction reoffending.**

What is EBDM?

Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) is the practice of using research findings to inform or guide decisions across the justice system.

Seeking truth is attempting to create agreement between "the intellect and objective reality."

– Professor Lawrence Principe, John Hopkins University

Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)
A Definition

Evidence Based Practices: A progressive, organizational use of direct, current scientific evidence to guide and inform efficient and effective criminal justice decision-making and the provision of correctional services.

Hierarchy of Evidence

Lowest Risk of Bias & Error

Highest Level of Evidence

Systematic Reviews

Random Controlled Trials

Controlled Studies

Uncontrolled Studies

Case Reports

Expert Opinion

Non-Expert Opinion

Hypothesis Development

Highest Risk of Bias & Error

Lowest Level of Evidence

Mesa County's EBDM Effort

An Initiative of the National Institute of Corrections in collaboration with:

- Center for Effective Public Policy
- Pretrial Justice Institute
- Justice Management Institute
- The Carey Group
- Mesa County Criminal Justice Leadership Group

Who is involved?

- Key Players
  - Law Enforcement
  - Prosecution
  - Defense
  - Judges
  - Criminal Justice Practitioners

The Local EBDM Executive Team

Honorable David Bottger, Chief Judge, 21st Judicial Dist.

Craig Henderson, County Court Judge, 21st Judicial Dist.

Pete Hautzinger, District Attorney, 21st Judicial Dist.

Stan Hilkey, Sheriff, Mesa County

Bert Nieslanik, Deputy Director, Alternative Defense Counsel

Linda Robinson, Chief Probation Officer, 21st J. D.

Dennis Berry, Director, Criminal Justice Services

Steve Colvin, Office Head Public Defenders Office

Joel Bishop, Manager, Criminal Justice Services

Jennifer Sheetz, Data Analysis

Sue Gormley, Local Project Coordinator

The Goal of EBDM Initiative

- ✓ **Test a "Framework" for evidence-based decision making at the local level using evidence to inform decisions that lead to risk and harm reduction**
- ✓ **Affirm existing practices that have demonstrated to be effective.**
- ✓ **Inspire and challenge practice**

Key Questions Asked:

- Who are we arresting?
- Who is in our Jail?
- Why are they in our Jail?
- What information is informing sentencing?
- What sentencing options are evidence-based?
- What are the outcomes of local criminal justice and treatment programs?

Focused on Four Key Principles

1. Validation
2. Interaction
3. Collaboration
4. Data Collection

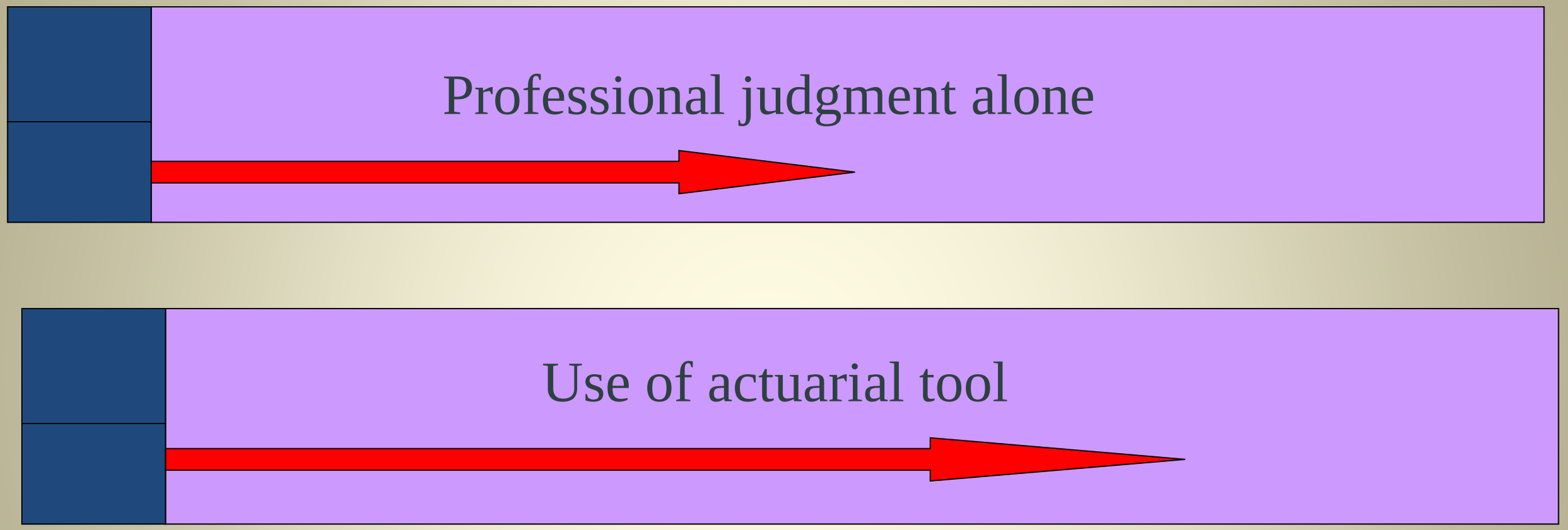
Principle #1 - Validation

- ✓ **The professional judgment of criminal justice system decision makers is enhanced when informed by evidence-based knowledge**

- ✓ **Examples:**
  - **Use of validated assessment tools**
  - **Validated treatment principles**

Evidence-based knowledge does not replace discretion but instead, informs decisions.

RESULTS DRIVEN PRACTICE



Source: Patricia M. Harris, “What Community Supervision Officers Need to Know About Actuarial Risk Assessment and Clinical Judgment,” Federal Probation, Vol. 70, Nr. 2 (September 2006)

Principle #2 - Interaction

- ✓ **Every interaction within the criminal justice system offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction**
- ✓ **Examples:**
  - **Law Enforcement Officer at the point of arrest**
  - **Pretrial officer at assessment**
  - **Judicial officer on the bench**
  - **Community Corrections Officers**
  - **Case Managers**
  - **Treatment Counselors, and so on…**

To be effective, justice system players must understand how their interactions influence others and have the knowledge and skills to enhance this influence.

Principle #3 - Collaboration

- **Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively at the individual, agency, and system levels**

- **Examples:**
  - **Establishment of policy teams and operational protocols that define how others will be consulted and decisions made Validated treatment principles**

Decision making responsibilities remain at the individual and agency level, however under the collaborative approach, input is received and other's interests are taken into account.

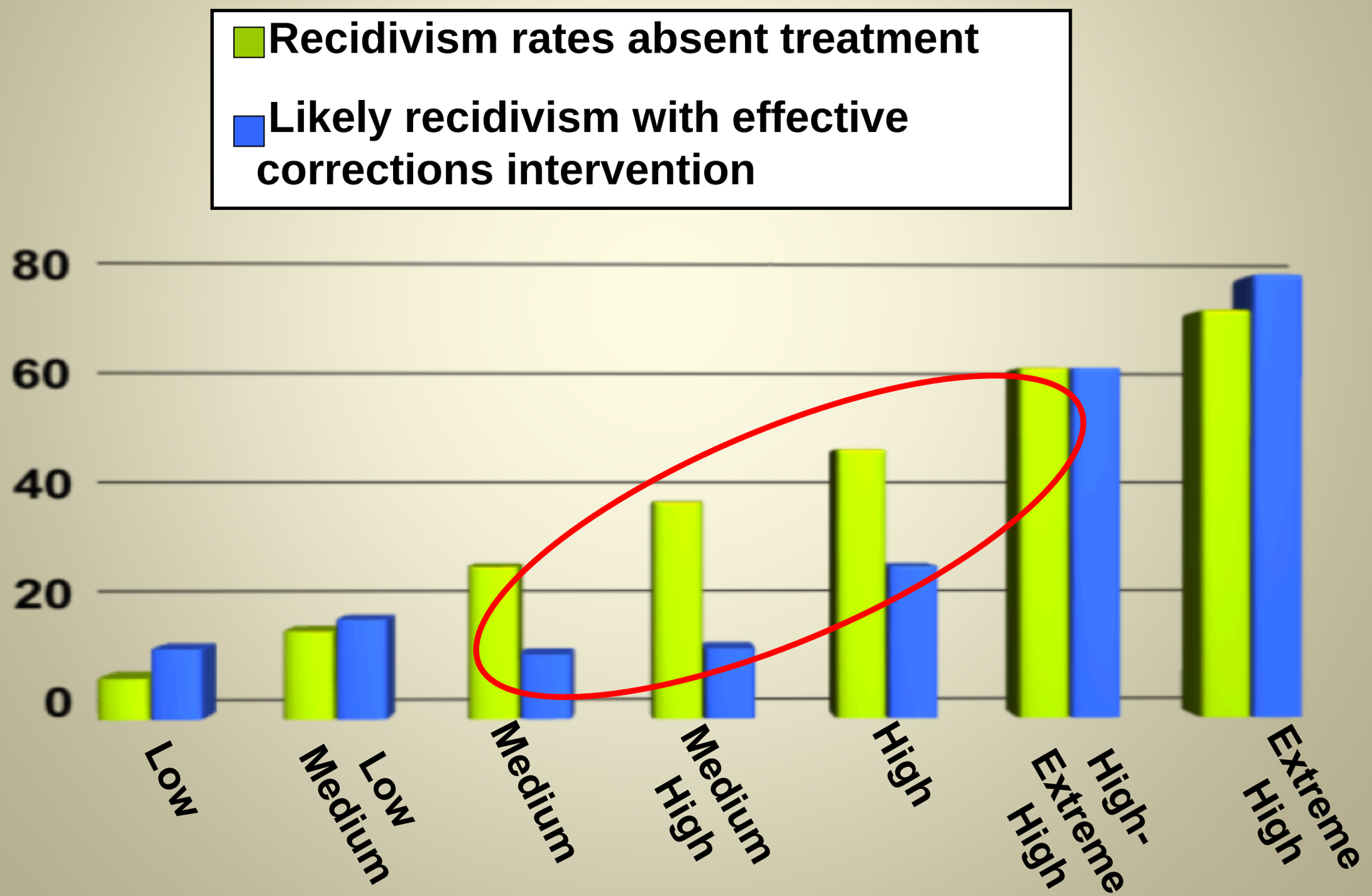
Principle #4 - Data

- ✓ **The criminal justice system will continually learn and improve when professionals make decisions based on the collection, analysis, and use of data and information.**

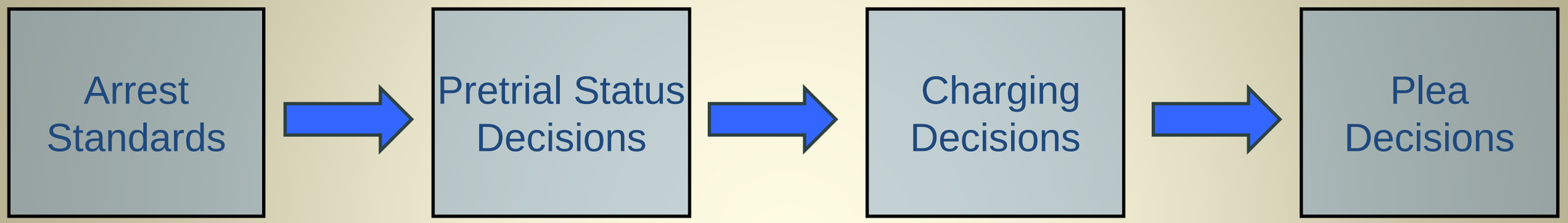
- ✓ **Examples:**
  - **Establishment of agency and system wide performance measures; feedback loops to examine the efficacy of current practice**

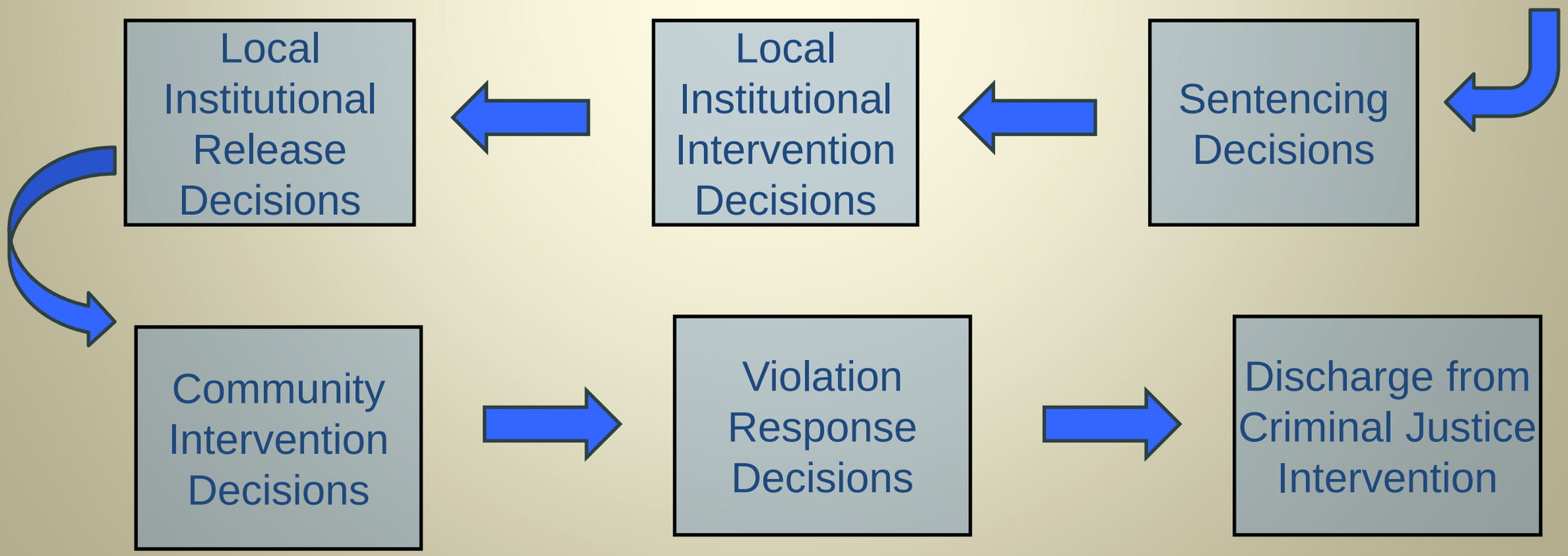
Where evidence is not immediately available, the justice system may need to use its own data to determine what is or is not working.

Impact of Risk Level on Recidivism



Key Decision Points





Five EBDM Focus Areas in Mesa County

- Arrest
- Pretrial
- Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports
- Sentencing Decisions
- Evidence-Based Court-Room

Core Values

- ✓ **Nothing in the initiative is meant to contradict or change the core justice system values of:**
  - **Public Safety**
  - **Fairness**
  - **Individual liberty**
  - **Respect for the rights, needs, and concerns of victims**
  - **Respect for the rights of people accused of crimes**
  - **Respect for the rule of law**
  - **Discretion**
  - **Appreciation for differences in perspectives and practices across jurisdictions**

System-Wide Logic Model

Lessons Learned

- **Who you put in a program is important – pay attention to risk**
- **What you target is important – pay attention to criminogenic needs**
- **How you target offender for change is important – use behavioral and cognitive-behavioral approaches and match to offender type**
- **How well you implement is important – adhere to research-based program and intervention designs**