

SASSI-4 SUD Screening Accuracy with Criminal Offenders

The Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) has been used successfully in correctional screening in multiple settings since its release in 1988. These include outpatient evaluations of offenders as well as assessments of incarcerated individuals in federal, state, and local correctional centers.

Many clients served in behavioral health and substance abuse treatment programs have histories of involvement with the criminal justice system in addition to mental health and substance use disorders. Samples in the SASSI-4 validation study included assessments in community corrections, probation and parole and drug courts, as well as cases from DWI and DOT education and screening programs. SASSI-4 overall screening accuracy in criminal justice settings was 95%; in DWI and DOT education programs SUD screening accuracy was 91%, and these accuracy levels were found not to differ significantly from the overall accuracy rate for all settings (92%). In addition, many cases included routine information on clients' number and types of arrests and blood alcohol levels. Analyses revealed that SASSI-4 screening accuracy was 92% for clients with a history of criminal offenses, and 90% for clients who had no such histories.ⁱ

Interestingly, of those who had been diagnosed with a substance use disorder, criminal offenders acknowledged significantly *less* illicit drug use and consequences as well as less alcohol use and consequences on the SASSI-4 face valid scales than did clients with diagnosed substance use disorders in settings other than criminal justice programs -- suggesting offenders minimized reported use and substance-related problems. By contrast, offenders with substance use disorders showed no differences in their endorsements of subtle items on the SASSI-4 compared to individuals with substance use disorders in other

types of assessment settings. Despite offenders' attempts at minimization, SASSI-4 overall accuracy in the offender samples was 94%. Together these findings illustrate strengths of using SASSI-4 to screen criminal offenders as compared to entirely face valid screens such as the AUDIT, CAGE or DAST. That is, the inclusion of subtle items on the SASSI-4 as well as a scale to identify clients' level of defensive responding strengthens the ability of the SASSI-4 to accurately identify clients with substance use disorders.

In addition to legal offenses and possible substance use disorders, offenders also often have other mental health problems, which can affect their responses on many types of assessments they are given. Research on the SASSI-4 has shown its screening sensitivity is 98% in dual diagnosis clients; specificity is 93% in persons diagnosed with nonsubstance-related psychological disorders only, for an overall accuracy rate of 97% in people suffering from other psychological disorders. Moreover, accuracy was shown to be unaffected by ethnic background, and other demographic variables such as age and education.

For information on integrating the SASSI-4 into correctional programs, please contact Customer Service at 800-726-0526.



201 Camelot Lane
Springville, IN 47462
800-726-0526
www.sassi.com

ⁱ For additional validation information please refer to: Lazowski, L.E. (2016). *Estimates of the reliability and criterion validity of the adult SASSI-4*. Springville, IN: The SASSI Institute.