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RESEARCHERS AIM TO IDENTIFY THOSE MOST AT RISK FOR DUI RECIDIVISM

TALLAHASSEE, FLA—In a recent study published in *Criminology & Public Policy* (CPP) [Volume 12, Issue 2], researchers reported that a significant proportion of first-time DUI offenders go on to become repeat DUI offenders. Many states base their sentence and treatment decisions on an offender's Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) at the time of their arrest, however, an offender's BAC alone does not act as a reliable indicator of their recidivism risk.

Research Scientists Karen L. Dugosh, David S. Festinger, and Douglas B. Marlowe of the Treatment Research Institute reported that although most punishment guidelines are determined by an offenders' BAC, there are other factors that should be taken into consideration when predicting recidivism risk. Criminal history, age at time of first arrest, prior substance abuse, and the loss of employment or expulsion from school because of drug or alcohol abuse were all found to be significant risk factors for recidivism. The authors suggest that police and prosecutors use a screening tool that incorporates numerous risk factors as a more effective way to identify which offenders require additional services because of an elevated recidivism risk.

Policy Essay authors James C. Fell and Robert B. Voas of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation agree that the use of a screening tool is important; however they question whether such a measure will be employed on a large scale because of shrinking court resources. Instead, to help prevent DUI recidivism, Fell and Voas recommend that states implement sobriety checkpoints, lower the legal BAC limit to 0.05, and move screening measures to medical facilities to be conducted by trained public health professionals. Further, Policy essay authors Matthew DeMichele of RTI International and Brian Payne of Old Dominion University recommend that risk assessment tools explore questions of why people began to drink and drive, the frequency of such behavior, and if there are periods of spontaneous remission. The final policy essay author, William F. Wieczorek of the State University of New York, College at Buffalo State believes that although BAC levels alone are not a valid indicator of an alcohol disorder, BAC levels should not be discounted as they may be useful to identify some individuals who would benefit from treatment.

Senior Editor for the segment, Alan Cavaiola of Monmouth University, notes that although not perfect or complete, researchers have made progress in identifying risk factors most associated with an individual's likelihood of DUI recidivism. Driving under the influence presents a major threat to public safety and Cavaiola believes that Dugosh and her colleagues have provided an important contribution to better understanding an offender's recidivism risk.