Screening for intellectual and developmental disabilities in jails: Are we there yet?


**Abstract**: Early identification of intellectual and developmental disabilities in persons in the criminal justice system is essential to protect their rights during arrest and trial, ensure safety when incarcerated, and maximize the opportunities to receive services while incarcerated and postrelease. Using telephone interviews of jail administrators (N=80) in 1 state, this study examined how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were identified in jails. Findings indicated that administrators varied widely in awareness of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their jails. Few jails (6%) used formal screening instruments for intellectual and developmental disabilities, others relied on officer observation and self-report (53%), and some provided no screening at all; in addition, officers received little training in this regard. Findings suggest that few jails are operationalizing best-practice screening processes for intellectual and developmental disabilities.