

Aruna Miller
Lt. GovernorWes Moore
GovernorBetsy Fox Tolentino
Acting Secretary

To: Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts
Maryland Chiefs and Sheriffs Association
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Maryland State's Attorney Association

From: Betsy Fox Tolentino, Acting Secretary
Department of Juvenile Services

Date: February 12, 2026

Re: Operational Updates to the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI)

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) provides this memorandum to inform our judicial and public safety partners of important operational updates to the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI) that will take effect on February 18, 2026.

DJS is responsible for ensuring that our policies, practices, and decision-making tools advance the intended outcomes of public safety, fairness, and accountability. The updates described below are intended to strengthen alignment between initial detention decisions with assessed risk.

DRAI Validation

Maryland law requires the DRAI to be independently validated every five years. The most recent validation was completed in 2025 by the University of Maryland Institute for Innovation and Implementation. Following a comprehensive review of outcome data and engaging in extensive consultation with the research team, DJS is confident in the DRAI's continued ability to predict the likelihood of youth returning to court and support sound public safety decision-making.

DRAI Updates: What is Changing

DJS has updated the decision grid that accompanies the DRAI to better align detention outcomes with assessed risk. The revised grid is streamlined and more directly aligned with the tool's risk classifications.

Key Points:

- **Mandatory detention.** For initial decisions, DJS will require detention for complaints involving Category I offenses, Category II offenses, or handgun violations. For these cases, staff may not override the DRAI to a less restrictive outcome, ensuring consistent application of the tool for these offenses.
- **Discretion for risk-based decisions is preserved.** For cases in which initial detention decisions are based solely on assessed risk (i.e., non-mandatory holds), intake officers retain the authority to override the tool when aggravating or mitigating factors support a different outcome.

Link to DRAI tool and Decision Making Grid

[https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG-Forms/Detention-Risk-Assessment-Instrument-\(DRAI\).pdf](https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG-Forms/Detention-Risk-Assessment-Instrument-(DRAI).pdf)

Commitment to Data and Continuous Improvement

DJS will monitor outcomes following implementation to ensure the updated DRAI functions as intended and produces the expected results. DJS remains committed to transparency, collaboration, and ongoing dialogue with system partners as we continue to refine practices across the juvenile justice system.

Questions or Concerns

If you have operational questions, policy concerns, or would like additional briefing, please contact:

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