



Evidence-Based Decision Tools: Smarter Tools for Actionable Results

Today's criminal justice leaders must navigate unprecedented challenges: resource constraints, public scrutiny, evolving standards, and a demand for measurable results. CNA's evidence-based decision support tools—including scorable checklists, policy implementation guides, and cost-benefit calculators—help agencies meet these demands with confidence, clarity, and credibility.

WHAT are evidence-based decision tools?

Evidence-based decision tools are structured instruments that help public safety agencies make informed decisions using data and proven methodologies. These tools include the following:

- **Scorable checklists:** Help document and track compliance and progress on key priorities.
- **Policy implementation guides:** Support strategic planning and policy execution.
- **Cost-benefit calculators:** Quantify the value of safety investments and improvements, providing agency-specific estimates of financial and social impacts.
- **Interactive toolkits:** Help agencies understand their capacity to implement new initiatives by providing online engagement with promising practices and innovative field guidance.

WHY should your agency use decision tools?

CNA's decision tools stand out because of their evidence-based approach, continuous usability, and user-friendly design. They offer structured, actionable insights that help agencies navigate complex challenges with clarity and confidence. By leveraging

these tools, agencies will improve outcomes through structured self-assessment and scoring, implement policies with greater speed and consistency, and demonstrate fiscal and social improvements with trusted analytics. This holistic support equips agencies well to meet the demands of modern public safety and criminal justice operations.

With CNA's decision tools, agencies will achieve the following:

- **Drive data-informed operations:** Decision tools provide structured, scorable frameworks to translate complex requirements into clear actions, ensuring that agencies identify and continuously assess gaps and prioritize actions.
- **Turn complex policy into actionable practice:** These tools simplify policy implementation through templates, decision trees, and standard operating procedure guides, ensuring consistent and equitable application.
- **Demonstrate the value of improvements and innovation:** Cost-benefit calculators help agencies justify investments and show returns, aiding them in securing funding and making informed trade-offs.
- **Improve transparency, equity, and efficiency:** These tools enhance operational readiness, strategic planning, fiscal stewardship, and community accountability.

Examples of CNA-developed decision tools

- [Active Shooter Exercise Toolkit](#)
- [Critical Incident Preparedness Toolkit](#)
- [Engaging Survivors of Crime with Empathy and Compassion: A Toolkit for Establishing Homicide Support Groups](#)
- [Precision Policing Initiative Toolkit](#)
- [Public Safety and Security Response Capability Calculator](#)

HOW can CNA help your agency with decision tools?

CNA offers comprehensive support to agencies in implementing and utilizing decision tools effectively. CNA provides both in-person and virtual support, collaborating with stakeholders and agencies to create tools that meet specific agency needs. We deliver a suite of comprehensive tools, all tailored to the **unique requirements of each agency**. CNA also facilitates the implementation process by offering training packages, virtual onboarding sessions, and continuous support to ensure that agencies can effectively use the tools.

Example decision tool areas include the following:

- ✓ Critical incident preparedness or response
- ✓ Technology capacity, implementation, or costs
- ✓ Crime analysis skills and capacity
- ✓ Violent crime reduction capacity
- ✓ Workforce analysis or decision-making
- ✓ AI Governance Checklist
- ✓ Explosive Device Response Operations Capability Calculator
- ✓ Implementation Toolkit for Real Time Crime Centers
- ✓ Managing Mass Gatherings: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement
- ✓ Non-Medical Points of Distribution Capability Calculator
- ✓ Strategic Planning Toolkit
- ✓ Technical Search and Rescue Capability Calculator
- ✓ Weapons of Mass Destruction/Hazardous Materials Response Capability Calculator

These tools are customizable to any topic of interest!

WHO should use decision tools?

Decision tools are designed for use by various public safety and criminal justice professionals. At the federal level, agencies such as the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, National Institute of Justice, and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services can benefit from these tools to support grant making, technical assistance, and research initiatives. State criminal justice agencies, including departments of corrections, attorney generals' offices, and state courts, can use decision tools for implementation support, compliance tracking, and cost justification. Local entities, such as sheriffs' offices, police departments, probation offices, district attorneys' offices, and public defenders, can leverage these tools for real-time assessments, policy rollouts, and budgeting. By using decision tools, these justice leaders will enhance their operational readiness, strategic planning, and community accountability.

About CNA

CNA is a not-for-profit analytical organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. With nearly 700 scientists, analysts, and professional staff across the world, CNA's mission is to provide data-driven, innovative solutions to our nation's toughest problems. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses—the Department of the Navy's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)—as well as the Institute for Public Research. The Center for Naval Analyses provides objective analytics to inform the decision-making by military leaders and ultimately improve the lethality and effectiveness of the joint force. The Institute for Public Research leverages data analytics and innovative methods to support federal, state, and local government officials as they work to advance national and homeland security.

To learn more or request assistance from CNA, please contact Center Director Vivian Elliott at elliottv@cna.org.