

# Psychological and Medical Evaluations of Correctional Officers

*Elizabeth Morris, M.A.*

*Chief Executive Office and Management Team Member*



## THE FMRT GROUP

Psychological and Medical Support  
for Safety-Sensitive Employers



## THE FMRT GROUP

- > Elizabeth Morris, M.A., CEO
- > The FMRT Group specializes psychological and medical support for safety-sensitive employers with an emphasis in public safety and law enforcement
- > Founded in 2005 by John F. Warren, Ph.D., PA-C
  - > Board Certified Forensic and Police and Public Safety (ABPP)
    - > 1:66 in the United States
    - > 1:3 in North Carolina



## THE FMRT GROUP

- > Over 47,000 pre- and post- hire psychological and medical evaluations conducted for public safety departments
- > Support more than 450 public safety departments with psychological, medical, and drug screening services. Our state's only one-stop-shop
- > Team of 18 culturally aware, doctoral-level psychologists



## THE INCEPTION

- > In 2014 The FMRT Group was commissioned by Commissioner Guice to address major concerns facing prisons
  - > Risk of litigation was high
  - > Applicants were back logged due to inefficient evaluation process
  - > Sole source provider inability to produce reports in timely manner





## GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

### > NC Criminal Justice Education Training and Standards Guidelines

- > *“Every person employed as a correctional officer or probation/parole officer by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice shall have been administered within one year prior to employment with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice **a psychological screening examination by a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist licensed to practice in North Carolina to determine the officer's mental and emotional suitability to fulfill the officer's particular responsibilities as stated in the essential job functions**” (12 NCAC 09G .0205 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STANDARDS).*

### > IACP Standards

- > *“The suitability of applicants for safety-sensitive positions should be examined in the context of the essential job functions **using interview, cognitive assessment, inquiry into relevant history, testing for normal and abnormal personality traits and other factors including conscientious, demeanor, and spoken/written language skills**” (Police Psychological Services Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police).*



## CULTURAL AWARENESS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- > In-depth evaluations performed by culturally aware doctoral-level psychologists with specialized knowledge of the essential job functions for correctional officers
- > Psychologists meet the examiner qualifications developed by IACP Psychological Services Section.
  - > Provide services within their boundaries and competence
  - > Trained and experienced specifically in the provision of pre-employment psychological for public safety positions
  - > Have no competing interests or relationships that could impair objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their functions.



## PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS FOR ADULT CORRECTIONS - PRISONS

(Liability sharing with state of NC)

- > The following standardized assessment tools comprise our pre-hire psychological evaluation. These assessments are coupled with a face-to-face clinical interview with a psychologist. To include in-person or telepsych.
- > **The FMRT *BRAINS*<sup>™</sup> Assessment** – Biographical tool used to explore candidates' historical events and attitudes
  - > **California Personality Inventory Police and Public Safety Selection Report** – Designed to measure “normal” personality traits and styles





## PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS FOR ADULT CORRECTIONS - PRISONS CONT.

(Liability sharing with state of NC)

- > **Personality Assessment Inventory Police and Public Safety Selection Report** – Designed to assess for psychopathology and/or negative personality traits and styles
- > **Shipley-2 or Shipley ILS** – Designed to provide a quick and reliable source of intellectual and cognitive abilities
- > **Writing Skills Assessment** – Designed to briefly assess reading and writing abilities within the context of previous educational experiences
- > **Clinical Interview** – Structured interview of historical behaviors and attitudes. Inquiry into medical, psychological, related history; educational, vocational, military, and other historical data points. Structured assessment of memory, problem-solving, abstracting ability. Examining psychologist explores and drills down on issues uncovered in totality of other factors





# PREVIOUS COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS FOR ADULT CORRECTIONS - PRISONS CONT.

(Liability sharing with state of NC)

- > **Clinical Interview includes scenario based questions, regarding:**
  - > **Command Presence**
  - > **Gang Affiliations**
  - > **Personal Life**
  - > **Rx**
  - > **Drug use**
  - > **Mental Health, including suicide awareness**

## Hiring Process I

This module helps to utilize a same-day hiring process to include evaluations conducted within the same day for both the regional employment offices and The FMRT Group.

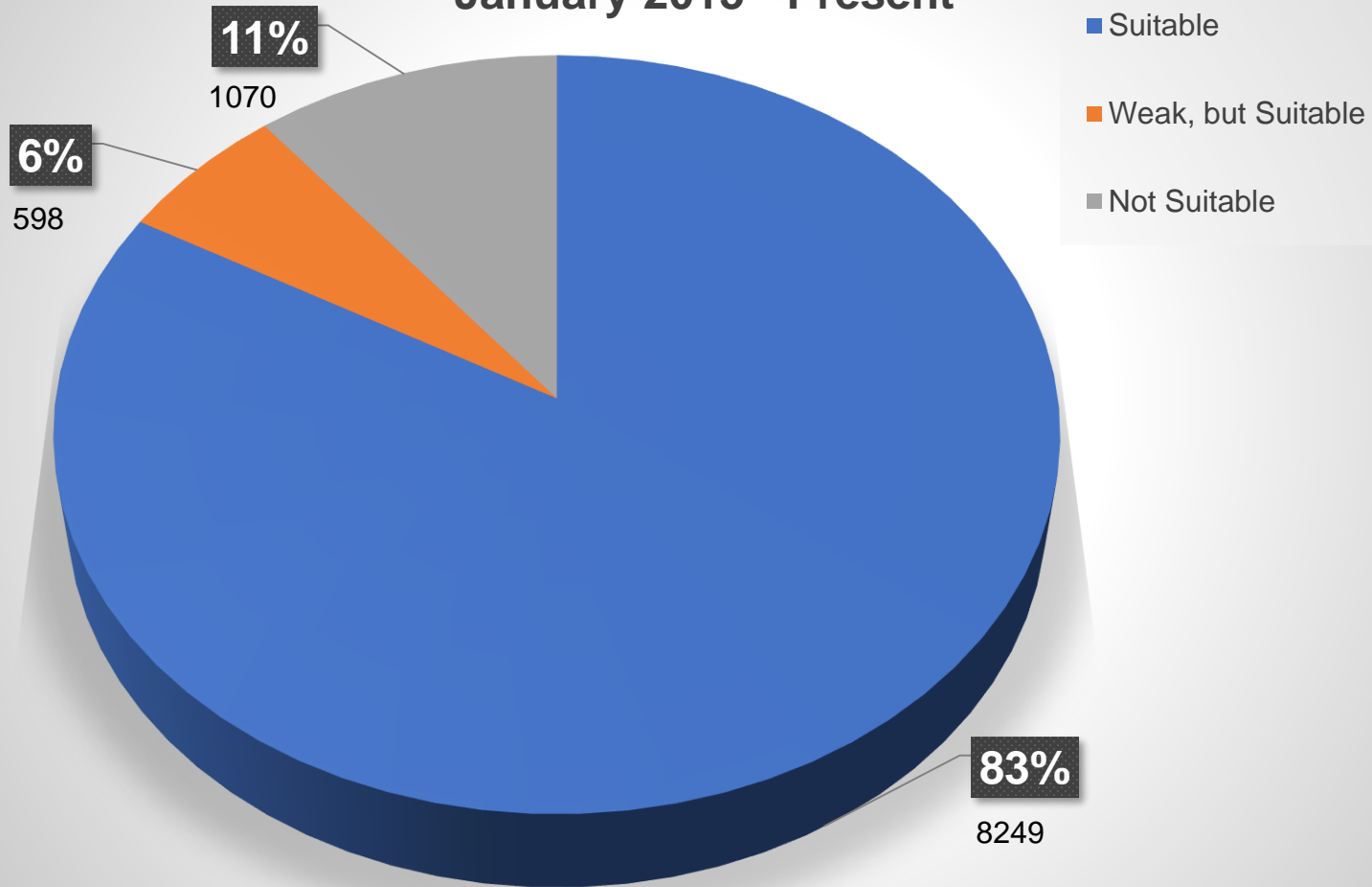


## Hiring Process II

This module helps to screen applicants before and after the regional employment office interview, aids in additional time for COPAT testing, and provides more time for applicant preparation. This module also incorporates evaluation scheduling by The FMRT Group.

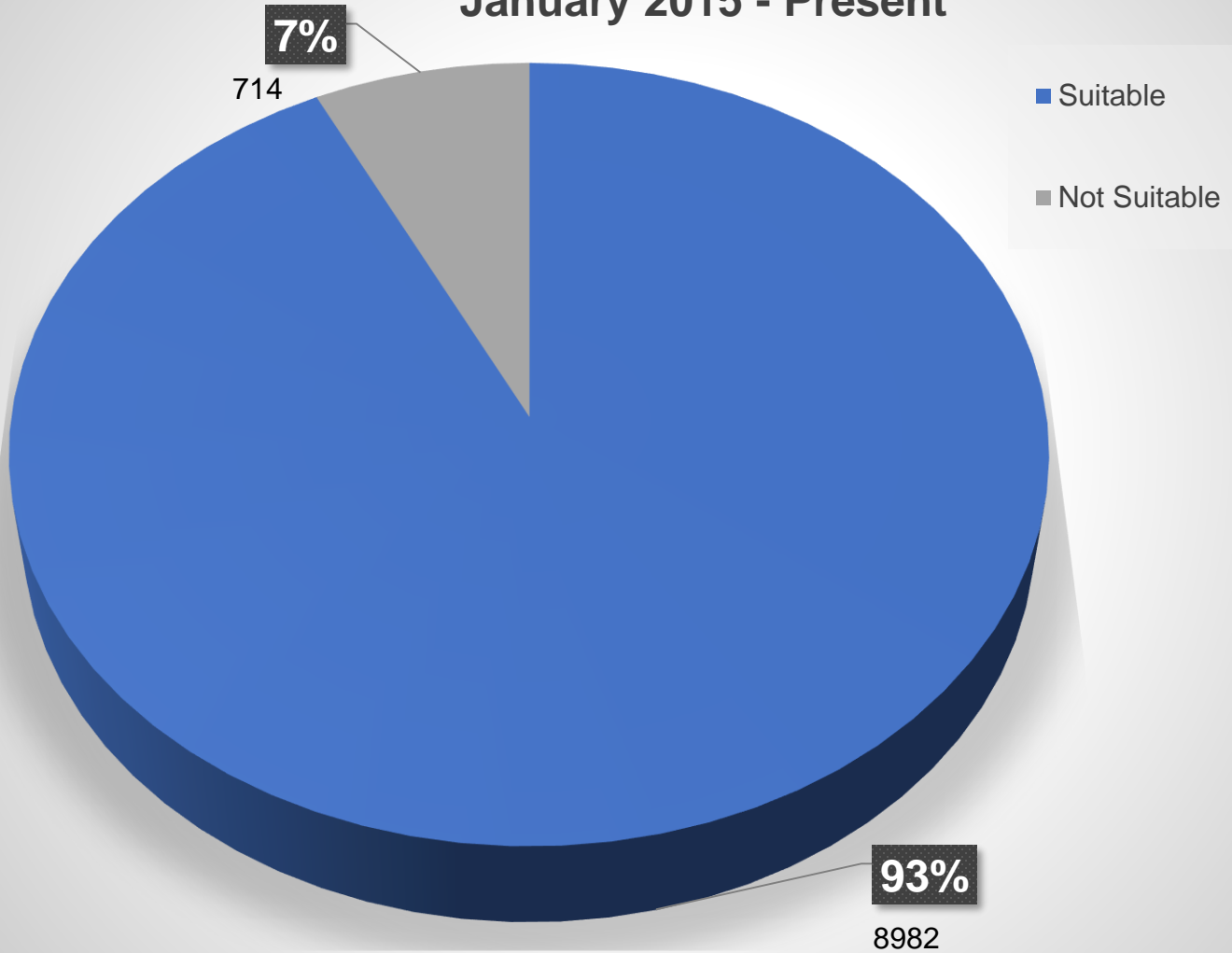


**Figure 1: NC Dept. of Public Safety - Psychological Suitability  
January 2015 - Present**





**Figure 2: NC Dept. of Public Safety - Medical Suitability  
January 2015 - Present**



**Table 1:** Data reflects the average amount of days between the date that a DPS applicant was received in house to be schedule and the actual date the applicant was scheduled (**12.87 days**). Last column shows the average amount of days between the applicant’s appointment day and the date that the employer received the report (**5.98 days**).

Date	Request - Appt. Date Variance	Appt. Date - Results Notice Variance
December 2018	16.48920863	7.741007194
January 2019	11.46875	5.088541667
February 2019	10.65714286	5.134693878
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.8717005</b>	<b>5.988080913</b>



## NEW PROCESS (As of 5/1/2019)

### MMPI-2-RF

- > 1 Test Model. Only 1 test will be given to applicants to assess suitability
  - > **Test of psychopathology only** – the scientific study of mental disorders  
(**abnormal personality traits**)
- > Everyone will not see a psychologist. ADC-P will determine which applicants see the psychologist by scoring from MMPI-2-RF
  - > Dr. Yossef Ben-Porath states that the assessment should not be used as a complete and independent psychological report of an individual. When asked specifically about NC Prisons “new process,” he stated that “this is not a procedure I would personally recommend.”



## THE NEW PROCESS - PITFALLS

(As of 4/18/2019)

- > **FACT:** The MMPI-2-RF **DOES NOT** assess psychological suitability
- > **FACT:** The MMPI-2-RF **DOES NOT** have “cut off” scores. The test is not pass/fail
- > **FACT:** Suitability is only assessed with a battery of testing
- > **FACT:** According to international guidelines and standards it is **HIGHLY UNETHICAL**, and not legally defensible for a psychologist to determine suitability with only one test





## THE NEW PROCESS - PITFALLS (As of 4/18/2019)

- > **FACT:** The new process **DOES NOT** meet Criminal Justice Education Training and Standards
- > **FACT:** EEOC and ADA violations
- > **FACT:** Unethical for anyone on staff to assess applicants
- > **FACT:** No liability sharing
- > **FACT:** Risks officer and inmate safety
- > **FACT:** Everyone will not see a psychologist.



## ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE DETECTED IN PRISONS' "BACK TO BASIC APPROACH

Issues our culturally-aware psychologists have encountered that **will not** be adequately detected in the MMPI-2-RF and/or the abbreviated history conducted by Prisons.

- > Criminal behaviors that go undetected because the applicants never got caught (driving while intoxicated, purchasing/selling drugs, purchasing alcohol for minors, possessing a fake ID, driving with suspended license, driving with no insurance, shoplifting).
- > Dating / living with convicted felons and/or habitual drug users.
- > Parents who have been investigated by Child Protective Services for abuse / neglect.



## ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE DETECTED IN PRISONS' "BACK TO BASIC APPROACH (continued)

- > Victims of physical and/or sexual abuse (making them prone to want to seek retaliation against inmates or be fearful of inmates).
- > Applicants with timid demeanors who lack a command presence, are soft-spoken, or are afraid to be in front of a crowd.
- > Applicants with aggressive demeanors who look forward to "pepper spraying inmates."
- > Veterans with 70% - 100% disability ratings for traumatic brain injury or mental health problems. Many of them cannot tolerate loud noises, confined spaces, sudden movements, or being around people who "look dangerous."
- > Applicants with racial, religious, and sexual orientation biases.



## ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE DETECTED IN PRISONS' "BACK TO BASIC APPROACH (continued)

- > Numerous applicants who indicate having been "laid off" on their applications. However, upon further inquiry, they were terminated for physical fights with co-workers and customers, consuming alcohol at work, using cell phone at work, excessive tardiness, sexual harassment, stalking behaviors, stealing, laziness, sleeping on the job, etc.
- > Applicants with severe sleep problems who will not be able to tolerate working 12-hour shifts, rotating shifts, or being mandated to work overtime.
- > Extremely outspoken applicants with no personal boundaries who have been disciplined at work for using offensive language or expressing their political views in a demonstrative manner.





## ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE DETECTED IN PRISONS' "BACK TO BASIC APPROACH (continued)

- > Applicants with histories of sexual deviance who dress seductively for the interview, act flirtatious, and are at high risk for sexual misconduct with inmates
- > Applicants with extremely poor integrity who blatantly lie on their application materials
- > Applicants with active disability or worker's compensation claims who openly admit they only want the job so they can get health insurance in order to have major surgeries.
- > Financial irresponsibility (vehicle recently repossessed, recent eviction from residence, not paying child support, wages / tax refunds being garnished due to excessive debt, ignoring student loans, ignoring medical bills, making no effort to work with creditors to consolidate or resolve past debt).



## WHY CO APPLICANTS DIDN'T ACCEPT THE POSITION

- > From my interview and acceptance it was going to be 6 months before I started the job.
- > Inadequate pay/expensive health insurance plan was so bad that I wouldn't be able to support and take care of myself and my family
- > No way I could afford to live in Wilmington and afford to work for one of the lowest paid state corrections in the country
- > I felt that I wasn't offered enough money for the 10 years of experience that I would bring/required long travel time
- > I was offered less money in NC then staying with VA DOC and I would lose \$13k in salary because I haven't worked in the state before

# Reducing Safety

Please find below a comparison of the current Adult Corrections - Prisons screening process and the former comprehensive evaluation process. New process will be implemented 5/1/2019

## Comprehensive Psychological Evaluation

Previous Process

- Biography
- Normal personality
- Abnormal personality
- IQ
- Poor reading/writing skills
- Prolonged drug abuse
- Alcoholism
- Integrity
- Command presence
- Severe mental health conditions
- Bankruptcy/ financial irresponsibility
- Gang affiliation
- Past violent behavior
- High PTSD ratings
- Perpetrators of domestic violence
- Disability ratings
- Sleep disorders
- Sexual deviance

## MMPI-2-RF

Current Process

- Abnormal personality

VS