A Response to the FAA's MMPI®-3 Policy

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In a recent *National Psychologist* article, Nelson (2021) reports that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has decided to "skip" the latest versions of the MMPI, the MMPI-2-RF and the MMPI-3. On this matter, the FAA is an outlier.

Other U.S. federal agencies require or permit use of the MMPI-2-RF in personnel assessment, and some are transitioning to the MMPI-3. Among these are the Departments of Defense (and its aviation community), Energy, State, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the FBI, numerous intelligence community agencies, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Marshals, U.S. Mint, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The largest police agencies in the U.S. (e.g., NYPD, LAPD, Chicago PD) routinely use the MMPI-2-RF. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and several Canadian provincial police services use or require the MMPI-2-RF. Several airlines in English-speaking countries outside the U.S. use the MMPI-2-RF in pilot candidate screening.

Nelson's (2021) report includes the following quote, attributed to the FAA:

> Research conducted by the FAA found the MMPI-2-RF to be less sensitive than the MMPI-2 in identifying confirmed aeromedically disqualifying psychopathology among ATCS (air traffic control specialists) applicants

This quote mischaracterizes the unpublished research upon which the FAA's decision ostensibly rests. These data actually demonstrated stronger predictive validity for MMPI-2-RF than for MMPI-2 scales, while indicating that lower (than the traditional T score 65) cutoffs on these MMPI-2-RF scales maximized their predictive utility. Such cutoffs are empirically supported and used routinely in personnel screening with the MMPI-2-RF (Corey & Ben-Porath, 2018) and other measures (Spilberg & Corey, 2020). Moreover, use of lower (than T score 65) cutoffs to optimize screening of Air Traffic Control Specialists has recently been recommended by the FAA itself (Greene, Nichols, Front, & King, 2021).

We expect the FAA will eventually reconsider its decision, but until then, readers should note that its position is anomalous among local, state, and federal public safety agencies, as well as the U.S. military and international aviation communities.

References

Corey, D. M., & Ben-Porath, Y. S. (2018). *Assessing police and other public safety personnel with the MMP-2-RF*. University of Minnesota Press.

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