

Acknowledgement

Act 848 of 1999 established the Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordinating Council. This council, assisted by a local government advisory group, is responsible for exploring the needs and possibilities for an integrated justice information system in Arkansas. Act 848 of 1999 designated the directors of the following state agencies to make up the coordinating council.

Administrative Office of the Courts
Arkansas Crime Information Center
Arkansas State Police
Department of Community Punishment
Department of Correction
Department of Information Systems
Division of Youth Services
State Crime Laboratory

The Coordinating Council elected David Eberdt, ACIC Director, as chairman and John Stewart, Deputy Director of the AOC, as vice-chairman. Other directors, or their designees, serving on the council were Major Steve Dozier, ASP; David Guntharp, DCP; Larry Norris, ADC; Sanford Cothren, DIS; Bill Steele, DYS; and Jim Clark, SCL.

The Local Government Advisory Group includes: Judge Frank Scroggins, Lafayette County Judge; Sheriff Larry Selig, Garland County Sheriff; Chief Brad King, UALR Chief of Police; Bob McMahan, Prosecutor Coordinator; Mike Walden, Craighead County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney; Didi Sallings, Public Defender Commission Director; Kent Krause, Pulaski County Deputy Public Defender; Judge William Storey, Washington County Circuit Judge; Wanda McIntosh, Phillips County Circuit Clerk; Gary Campbell, Fort Smith City Board of Directors; and Paul Kelly, Little Rock City Board of Directors.

Administrative support of the council has been provided by Executive Director Leslie Powell and the staff of the Arkansas Sentencing Commission.

Executive Summary

Criminal justice agencies in Arkansas are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of *integrating* their information systems. To *electronically share* information will greatly improve the quality and completeness of everyone's data, which will enable much better decisions to be made during the criminal justice process. In addition, integration will allow the limited criminal justice resources to be more efficiently and effectively utilized.

Integration does *not* mean consolidation of systems, but rather the sharing of information between existing systems. The challenge is to build upon those existing systems while at the same time taking advantage of new technologies to reach out to new users and new information sources. Determining what information should be shared, at what point, between what agencies, is a key element in defining an integrated justice information system for Arkansas.

Act 848 of 1999 established the Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordination Council. This group, assisted by a local government advisory group, has been exploring the needs and possibilities for an integrated justice information system. Since no funding was approved for their work, the council sought a federal planning grant in the amount of \$163,155. In addition, \$25,000 has been awarded from the National Governor's Association to assist the state in developing a proposal under the NGA "Best Practices" program. The council was also assisted by Nortel Networks under the Governor's Technology Initiative. It is generally recognized that this integration effort will extend over a period of years and will require substantial funding to achieve the full potential and benefits of an integrated justice information system.

This report provides a description of *what integration is*. It also includes limited *recommendations* and a proposed legislative bill that will continue the Coordinating Council for another biennium. A separate appropriations bill to provide some state financial support is also recommended.

Integration

In Arkansas, there are a variety of computer systems at the city, county and state levels that have been implemented by individual criminal justice agencies. Unfortunately, there is not an overall structure in place that allows information in these computers to be shared among all those criminal justice agencies.

Today, when a defendant proceeds through the criminal justice system, information on that individual is re-entered over and over into multiple databases. Not only is there a great waste of time in making these duplicate entries, but it leads to errors and delays. Critical data on the individual is often not available to those who need it when they need it. By repeatedly re-creating files, criminal justice officials are diverted from their real job. In addition, with separate and independent systems, there is not an automated way to keep track or generate a complete profile on an individual offender.

Technology should be used to capture data at the earliest opportunity, built on unique identifiers. This original data should then grow, with additions being made at each decision-point during criminal justice processing. It should become a seamless record on the individual as he or she goes through the criminal justice system.

To achieve this “integration”, there must be connectivity and linking of the various systems, so that information can be shared outside of the individual agency that creates the data.

It must be understood that an integrated system does *not* mean a consolidated system. Integration should allow for individual agency systems to continue. The ideal integrated ‘system’ would have a logical central repository, with links to the real data, and provide for individual systems to be maintained and enhanced as needed.

Current environment

Before an integrated system can be designed, we need to have a better understanding of the current situation in Arkansas. A comprehensive assessment of existing procedures and technology should be undertaken. This assessment will also identify related issues and obstacles, and will be used to develop a vision and strategy that meets Arkansas’ criminal justice and public safety objectives. This assessment will also involve a major effort to educate and gather input on the concept of integration.

Advantages and Opportunities.

There are numerous advantages in sharing criminal justice information. The following are examples, not listed in any particular order, of the opportunities in an integrated information system.

- Reduction or elimination of redundant data entry. Data should be entered or updated at the transaction point, and then transmitted forward to the next level.
- Common information (controlled by the information “owner”) can be shared under agreed upon standards.
- Electronic linking of dispositions to the original charges.
- Electronic scheduling (i.e., court dockets accessible by attorneys, prospective jurors, witnesses).
- Electronic penitentiary commitments (i.e., data is “pushed” from the sentencing Court to the transporting official to the DCP or ADC).
- Images can be incorporated (i.e., mug shots, photos, documents).
- Conformance with national standards, permitting interstate sharing.
- Single offender profiles can be created, compiled from all contributing systems (i.e., all charges, dispositions, orders, aliases, demographic data, custody data).
- System is expandable, both horizontally across agencies, as well as vertically from local to state to federal levels of government.
- Other processes can be automated, such as: electronic citations, electronic signatures, electronic calendars, electronic commitments.

Ideal scenario

The ideal scenario for processing an individual through an *integrated* criminal justice system could be described as follows:

An individual is arrested. At the time of the arrest, an electronic “base record” is created. The initial demographic data is pulled from state driver license files by scanning the bar code on the subject’s driver license. If the individual has a prior criminal history, that data will be electronically retrieved from the state criminal history file and attached to the new base record. This information becomes the law enforcement agency case file.

When the individual is placed in jail, the booking record is electronically generated from the base arrest data. Fingerprint and mug shots images from the LiveScan units are attached. The state criminal history repository is electronically

updated with this initial arrest data, and any new information, such as aliases, is added to the state “master” criminal history file.

As these arrest and booking steps are taking place, another automated process involving the prosecutor is occurring. Data from the electronic arrest record is transmitted to an “inbox” at the prosecutor’s office. A new prosecutor case file is generated. When a charging decision is made, the prosecutor system transmits the case file, with his charge data added, to an “inbox” at the court clerk’s office. A court case file is created using this electronic data.

In court, if the individual is found guilty, sentence and commitment details are electronically transmitted to either the DCP probation system or the ADC inmate system. These systems electronically receive the data immediately, *before* the defendant arrives. The information is also transmitted to the state criminal history repository, where the composite history record is now in one location (logical or physical) and includes the initial arrest charge, prosecutor charge, court charge, the disposition, the custody status, etc.

The ideal scenario for juveniles would be very similar, incorporating data from the juvenile justice components, with particular attention on confidentiality.

In this integrated process, electronic linking to other governmental data sources will also be possible. In addition, it will allow for the creation of a wide variety of management statistics.

The structure for sharing.

Shared information must be *structured*. This means the information format must be rigorously defined (e.g., date-of-birth in a standardized format) rather than free-text at the points of exchange. Shared information may be text-based, photographs, fingerprints, page images, or basically any information which can be reduced to a form that can be sent between computers via a telecommunications network.

Sharing must also be based on *open standards* and must be attuned to current information technological, especially the *Internet* and Internet-like solutions. Sharing will require a telecommunications infrastructure, using existing facilities where available and providing new facilities where necessary, such as the Internet. This infrastructure must be based on open technical standards, with broad interoperability. There is also a need for a standard *sharing vocabulary* (i.e., definition of terms). While there will be certain independence in the various systems, there must at least be a common understanding of terms and technology.

Each instance of information sharing involves two sharing entities. The *holder* entity is always a governmental unit; the *receiver* entity may be governmental or private (e.g., defense attorney, day care center, private citizen). The holder must be willing, able

and entitled to provide the information; the receiver must be able to demonstrate a need for the information, be able to receive it, and agree to abide by usage rules set by the holder. No holder is forced to share.

Sharing Functions

Integration may be referred to as *horizontal* (e.g., between law enforcement, the prosecutor and the court all at the same level) or *vertical* (e.g., from local to state levels, from trial court to appellate courts, etc.). Interagency integration, whether horizontal or vertical, also refers to the ability to access and share information at key decision points. Transactions normally considered in integration efforts include the ability to:

1. Electronically **query** local, regional, statewide and national databases to determine the criminal justice status of a person (e.g., whether a person is currently wanted by another jurisdiction, has charges pending in another jurisdiction, is currently under some form of correctional supervision, or has a criminal history at the state or national level);
2. Electronically **push** pre-agreed information to another agency (e.g., passing arrest information from a law enforcement agency to the prosecuting attorney; or the prosecutor case filing to a court system; or commitment to the state inmate system);
3. Electronically **pull** pre-agreed information from other systems (e.g., arrest booking system automatically retrieves a subject's criminal history from the state and national repositories);
4. Electronically **Publish** pre-agreed information on people, cases, events and agency actions (e.g., scheduled court events, availability of community resources, criminal history records, sex offender assessment, etc.);
5. Electronically **Subscribe** to a notification service (e.g., probation officer is notified if their probationer has been arrested).

The Business Case for sharing.

The business case for integration rests on four principles. First, shared information is **more accurate**; it is collected once and use many times, thereby avoiding the misunderstandings and keying errors associated with multiple collection. Second, shared information is **more timely**; it can often be made available instantly rather than waiting for a separate collection effort. Third, shared information is **more complete**; information from multiple sources can be assembled into a full description. Finally, shared information is **less expensive**; it costs less to store data and send it to another user than it does to collect it again.

The time is now.

Information sharing does *not* depend on any future technology breakthroughs; present technology is sufficient. It does not even depend on major changes in the mind set of present practitioners; there is already broad consensus on the need for sharing. It does depend on *leadership*, on *funding*, on *participation*, and on *patience*.

The time is “ripe” to define and begin implementing an integrated criminal justice information system for Arkansas. It will be a comprehensive, multi-phased, multi-year effort. It will require a major commitment by all levels of government in this state. Nevertheless, it is a project that must be undertaken. It has so many possibilities and advantages, that it must be supported and endorsed and implemented.

Recommendations

The Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordinating Council respectfully submits the following recommendations:

1. Planning for an integrated justice information system in Arkansas should continue at a higher priority. Broad support is needed from the Governor, the Chief Justice and members of the Arkansas General Assembly, as well as from local government officials.
2. Legislation should be approved by the 2001 General Assembly that will re-authorize the Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordinating Council. (A proposed legislative bill is included on the following page.)
3. State funding should be approved for one Project Director and two Research Assistants, plus operating expenses for these staff positions, and travel and meeting expenses for the council and local government advisory group.
4. A comprehensive statewide dialog involving all criminal justice officials should be undertaken, to gain input and collaboration in the design of an integrated system for Arkansas. The concept and potential benefits must be broadly understood and supported.

Proposed Legislative Bill

"TO ESTABLISH A COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR AN INTEGRATED JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

SECTION 1. (a) There is hereby established the Arkansas Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordinating Council.

(b) The council shall consist of the directors of: (1) the Administrative Office of the Courts; (2) the Department of Correction; (3) the Department of Community Punishment; (4) the Division of Youth Services; (5) the Arkansas Crime Information Center; (6) the Arkansas State Police; (7) the State Crime Laboratory; (8) the Department of Information Systems; (9) the Prosecutor Coordinator's Office; and (10) the Arkansas Sentencing Commission. Council members shall serve without compensation, except for travel and meeting expenses as may be available.

(c) A director may designate a person in their agency to serve in their place who has the authority to make policy and fiscal decisions in the name of the director.

(d) The council shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among the members of the council.

(e) The council shall have authority to: (1) examine and evaluate the existing justice information systems in Arkansas, to identify alternative solutions and make recommendations for improvements; (2) to establish standards relating to technology, management, privacy, security, and public access; (3) to plan and develop specific goals and timetables for a complete integrated justice information system; and (4) to perform such related studies or tasks as requested by the Governor, the Chief Justice, the Legislature, or other entities with similar interest and authority.

SECTION 2. (a) The council shall appoint a standing local government advisory group to collaborate and advise the council on local government integrated justice information system issues and the impact of integrated system policies and decisions on local units of government. The advisory group shall consist of a sheriff, chief of police, prosecuting attorney, a municipal judge, a public defender, a circuit clerk, a member of a city governing body, a county judge and such other local government representatives as

determined by the council to be necessary to fully represent local government interests. Members of the advisory group shall serve without compensation, except for travel and meeting expenses as may be available.

(b) The council may designate other advisory groups as needed to analyze relevant issues and perform necessary studies. Members of such groups shall serve without compensation, except for travel and meeting expenses as may be available.

SECTION 3. (a) The Arkansas Crime Information Center shall serve as the primary support agency for the Arkansas Integrated Justice Information Systems Coordinating Council. In behalf of the Coordinating Council, the Center may accept any and all grants, donations, bequests, and devises, conditional or otherwise, of money, property, services, or other things of value which may be received from the federal government or any agency thereof, or any institution, person, firm, or corporation, public or private, to be held, used, or applied for any or all of the purposes specified in this chapter, in accordance with the terms and conditions of any such grant or funding source.

(b) Receipt of each grant or donation shall be detailed in an annual report that shall be made to the Governor, the Chief Justice and the Legislature by September 30 of each year.

SECTION 4. The effective date shall be July 1, 2001.