

Strategic Business Issue

Incident/Standard Police Report Subcommittee

Work Group Membership

Chair: Commander David Trupp – Streamwood PD

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Current Situation

The State of Illinois is currently represented by approximately 1,042 separate, autonomous law enforcement agencies¹. Each of these agencies has incident level reporting capabilities that range from paper based reporting to fully automated incident reporting/case management systems. A majority of these agencies have hybrid systems that fall somewhere in the middle, with paper being generated and then the data is manually entered and stored on a local records management system. This is not ideal due to the redundancy of the data entry but is generally the most cost effective way for agencies to digitize their information.

Local information/records management systems are generally proprietary and have difficulty integrating with other systems. Some of these problems are addressed by the creation of regional records management systems that involve several agencies pooling resources to lower costs and improve information sharing horizontally between law enforcement entities. Full integration, not only horizontally but vertically through the entire justice process is realized in a few progressive communities in Illinois but that is more the exception than the rule. Funding and budgetary restraints are a major hurdle that agencies, especially smaller ones, must overcome when deciding how to record, store and share information.

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, October 2002, NCJ 194066

Currently the State of Illinois requires that agencies report crime data in the form of the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), which agencies are required to submit yearly. The UCR captures crime statistics only and not incident level data. Additionally, in 2003, lawmakers in Illinois enacted legislation requiring the reporting of standardized traffic stop data to the Department of Transportation². Aside from these two requirements, there is no legislative or federal mandate to report or standardize incident level data. Over the years, the federal government has attempted to upgrade the quality of data reporting by developing a National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). This system of collecting incident level data is not mandated and has not been adopted by Illinois. Currently the federal government is working on CJIS National Data Exchange (NDEx) which will incorporate both UCR and NIBRS data in an attempt to create national standards for both arrest and incident level reporting. The NDEx will also be a fusion point for the correlation of nationally-based criminal justice information with certain national security data³. This is still in the development stages.

As a general rule, most systems employed by departments are adequate for their needs. Unfortunately, software vendors tend to develop products that specifically fit the needs of their individual customers. With no statutory guidance, this makes it difficult for communities with proprietary systems to share and analyze information in a standardized format. In addition to the technical aspects of the problem, there is also a possessive culture in law enforcement that can become a barrier to information sharing in some instances. Agency heads are at times reluctant to share information for a myriad of reasons to include, but are not limited to, privacy, data ownership, legal issues, as well as political pressures.

Information technology in law enforcement has improved by leaps and bounds from where it was 10 years ago. Many agencies were aggressive in developing information systems that fit their own needs and were able to share information on a limited basis as needed. Today there is an additional need to capture data pertinent to homeland security issues. Therefore law enforcement needs a more open information sharing philosophy. The challenge is to work forward with the existing technologies, finding commonalities and setting standards so that we can not only share what we currently have, but to set a standard that can be used in the strategic planning of every Illinois law enforcement agency.

Issues

In the committee discussions, it was identified where the law enforcement community stood (as outlined above), and where it needed to be, (IIJIS strategic plan). In those discussions, the committee was able to identify several issues that needed to be addressed to successfully implement a standardized statewide incident reporting structure.

1. **Legislative Support** – Current legislative support is not as encompassing as it needs to be to facilitate a statewide standardized incident reporting structure.

² 625 ILCS 5/11-212

³ US Department of Justice – Office of Justice Programs, Information Technology Initiatives, June 2005

2. **Funding** – Fiscal and budgetary constraints are a major roadblock to information technology initiatives, especially for smaller departments.
3. **Infrastructure** - Many departments do not have the infrastructure necessary to support larger scale technology initiatives. The issue of availability of wireless mobile technology to support field reporting must also be addressed.
4. **Support** – A technical and training support system needs to be in place to ensure smooth implementation and maintenance of a statewide reporting system.
5. **Marketing** – Necessary to create incentives or educate the benefits to increase buy-in of law enforcement managers. This will create an environment more conducive to information sharing.

Impact if Not Implemented

Creating a statewide standardized incident reporting format is part of the foundation for a much larger information sharing initiative. The inability to share information, especially incident level information, across jurisdictional boundaries affects law enforcement operations both tactically and strategically. Some of the most pressing issues that would arise are:

1. **Cross Jurisdictional Crimes** – Law enforcement for years has been handicapped by the fact that criminal activities generally do not hold specific boundaries. Officers have relied upon bulletins and manual forms of information sharing to compare and combat criminal activity. Not implementing a system to tie information together electronically will hamper law enforcement efforts identify trends and identify specific cross jurisdictional criminal activity.
2. **Homeland Security** – The current homeland security environment requires a greater interagency sharing of information approach than has been conducted in the past. A greater emphasis on intelligence gathering and tracking is necessary to combat contemporary threats. Tracking the movement of terrorist suspects through their causal contact with law enforcement can provide crucial information that assists homeland security officials in their efforts to thwart terrorist acts.
3. **Efficient Judicial Process** – The justice system, as well as law enforcement, relies on current and accurate information to be able to effectively dispense fair and just decisions. The more timely and accurate information that is available to justice decision makers increases the effectiveness on the entire process.

Proposed Solution

Standardized incident reporting statewide has the ability to take on a number of different forms. The workgroup came to several conclusions, most of which were primarily based on the fact that several projects in the State are already underway. Our assumptions were based upon work already underway by the IIJIS Governing Board as well as State Police & Chicago Police Department I-CLEAR/I-CASE initiatives. The following items are the components of a multi-tiered strategy to address the problem.

1. **Legislative Initiative** - Propose or alter current legislation to include mandatory electronic reporting of incident level data. Data should be standardized and compatible with current Federal initiatives. Care should be taken to not create an undue financial burden on law enforcement agencies by funding the mandate or making grant funds readily available for use.
2. **Statewide Electronic Reporting System** –Promote the implementation of a statewide reporting system.
 - a. Create a central data repository available to all agencies.
 - b. Create data standards and protocols for submission into the repository.
 - c. Create a reporting mechanism/standardized statewide RMS for agency use if desired.
 - d. Provide education/training program for implementation and maintenance of repository protocols.
 - e. Ensure emergency and disaster recovery plans are in place.
 - f. Provide sustained technical support (24hr. help desk)
3. **Support existing incident reporting** – Recognize that there are many records management systems currently in use and will need assistance, both financially and technically, to integrate into a statewide data repository.
 - a. Link grant funding to integration of incident reporting and training, or education of integration.
 - b. Hire technical experts to assist with GJXDM conversion.
4. **Mobile reporting** – Address the issue of mobile data reporting and the ability to provide 100% wireless connectivity statewide.
 - a. Establish reporting standards.
 - b. Develop and support reporting solutions.

Expected Benefits

The implementation of a statewide standardized incident report is a large scale and challenging project. Its successful implementation would greatly impact how law enforcement utilizes information throughout the State. Tracking crime trends regionally gives law enforcement planners the tools necessary to effectively respond to and anticipate criminal activity. The availability of incident level data in a user friendly, robust format can fundamentally change the effectiveness of, not only law enforcement, but the entire judicial process. This will be accomplished by:

1. Timely and accurate information flow of information horizontally through the law enforcement community.
2. An increase in our ability to utilize crime and data analysis as an investigative tool.
3. Increased effectiveness of homeland security efforts.
4. Decreasing crime rates.

Dependencies

Several assumptions were made by the workgroup when discussing some of the challenges and benefits involved with the standardized incident report issue. Some of the larger issues that could undermine the success of the project are:

1. **Leadership** – Consistent and sustained leadership on, not just the incident report issue, but integration issues in general must be present. The leadership comes in several forms.
 - a. *Legislative*
 - b. *IIJIS Implementation Board*
 - c. *ICJIA (Funding, Staff & resources)*
 - d. *State Police – Staff & resources*
2. **Intergovernmental Agreements** – An increased culture of information sharing as outline through both legislation and intergovernmental agreements to abide by agreed upon guidelines for the sharing and utilization of information.
3. **Incident Repository** – The creation of a centralized incident repository as well as the infrastructure, funding, data translation solutions, and a formal structure to administer the program.

Alternatives

Some alternatives courses of action were considered within the committee discussions as well:

1. **Business as usual** – In our current political as well as practical climate, doing things the way they have always been done is not a viable option. Laws, perceptions, and needs change frequently and business practices must also change to accommodate contemporary issues.
2. **Pushing solution to the local level** - Letting each agency find it's own solution was considered but the evolution to one statewide standardized incident collection system would simply take decades.