

Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction: The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Strategic Planning Initiative

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (the Authority) is excited to embark upon the 2010 Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction: Strategic Planning Initiative. The initiative will commence with an intensive two-day strategic planning summit that will be an exploration of those policies, practices and programs that have proven to be effective in solving the real-world problems that confront the criminal justice system in all its phases. The summit is the first step in bringing together policymakers and practitioners at the state and local levels to craft a long-range plan to guide criminal justice policy, funding and research over the coming years.

ICJIA overview

Created in 1983, the Authority is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. The Authority works with key leaders from the justice system and the public to identify critical issues facing the criminal justice system in Illinois, and to propose and evaluate policies, programs, and legislation that address those issues.

The Authority also works to ensure the criminal justice system in Illinois is efficient and effective. The Authority's specific powers and duties are detailed in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act [20 ILCS 3930]. The statutory responsibilities of the Authority fit into four areas: grants administration; research and analysis; policy and planning; and information systems and technology.

Grants administration

The Authority:

- Implements and funds victim assistance and law enforcement programs under the Edward Byrne

Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Victims of Crime Act, Violence Against Women Act, and other grant programs as they become available.

- Monitors program activity and provides technical assistance to grantees.
- Provides staff support to the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, an 11-member board working to curb motor vehicle theft.
- Coordinates the Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition, charged with evaluating statewide juvenile crime prevention needs and overseeing juvenile crime prevention planning initiatives.

Research and analysis

The Authority:

- Publishes research studies that analyze a variety of crime trends and criminal justice issues.
- Acts as a clearinghouse for information and research on crime and the criminal justice system.
- Audits the state central repositories of criminal history record information for data accuracy and completeness.
- Develops and tests statistical methodologies and provides statistical advice and interpretation to support criminal justice decision making.

Policy and planning

The Authority:

- Develops and assists in the implementation of comprehensive strategies for drug and violent crime law enforcement, crime control and prevention, and assistance to crime victims using federal funds awarded to Illinois.

- Advises the Governor and the General Assembly on criminal justice policies and legislation.
- Coordinates policymaking groups to learn about ongoing concerns of criminal justice officials.
- Develops and evaluates state and local programs for improving law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice.

Information systems and technology

The Authority:

- Designs, develops, and supports systems which enhance the quality of victim service data.
- Serves as the sole administrative appeal body for determining citizen challenges to the accuracy of their criminal history records.
- Monitors the operation of existing criminal justice information systems to protect the constitutional rights and privacy of citizens.
- Supports the development of an integrated criminal justice information network in Illinois.

The prior strategic planning initiative

In 1999, the Authority engaged in a comprehensive planning process to direct its administration of federal grant funds and inform its research and policy agenda. The process involved research, data collection, and input from members of the criminal justice community. The information was incorporated into the agenda of a two-day planning event in June 2000, attended by 150 criminal justice policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from across Illinois.

After the planning event, working groups refined the issues and developed strategic goals, objectives, and action steps to guide development and implementation of the State Criminal Justice Plan. The plan was designed to serve as a long-term road map to guide the Authority's funding, research and evaluation, and legislative and policy initiatives for the next 10 years.

In the last decade the need to connect justice processes with a broad array of health and human services has become apparent; at the same time,

there has been growing support for strategies and programs which demonstrate effectiveness through a deliberate and measurable approach. These developments have come to light in a fiscally challenging time. An extraordinarily efficient and effective allocation of resources is necessary to ensure the public safety, health, and welfare of Illinois citizens.

A new strategic planning effort

In November 2009, the Authority initiated a strategic planning effort. This effort, unlike the 1999 effort, recognizes the barriers posed by the current fiscal environment in Illinois and around the country, and the uncertain status of continued federal funding. Bearing in mind these challenges, the overall goal of the current initiative is to provide information on effective strategies to address justice-related challenges by shifting resources, utilizing evidence-based or promising practices, promoting professional development and training, and forming cross-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional partnerships to conserve resources and share information.

Between November 2009 and March 2010, the Authority engaged in a comprehensive assessment process to identify challenges within the criminal justice system. Authority staff gathered information from state and local leaders, criminal justice practitioners, policymakers, and service providers about the primary issues facing their agencies or jurisdictions related to the effective administration of services and sanctions. This multi-tiered process included phone interviews with local and county-level law enforcement, state's attorneys, public defenders, judges, probation and court services officers, and human services providers.

The Authority also garnered input on the structure, content, and administration of a two-day strategic planning summit from an advisory group of Illinois agency directors who work with, and implement public policies for, criminal justice-involved populations.

Additionally, the Authority hosted a workgroup of academic researchers and public policy advocates to identify their most pressing concerns resulting from research and direct work in the field.

Lastly, the Authority met with the leaders of existing criminal justice reform initiatives on the issues of mental health and justice, offender reentry, victim services, and corrections reform to ensure the strategic planning process complemented and was informed by work already underway to improve and enhance the adult criminal justice system. Staff also reviewed existing academic and public policy literature about criminal justice policies, practices, and programs.

The needs assessment was completed and the most prevalent issues were identified. Topics were validated using existing Illinois criminal justice and health and human services data for quantitative evidence. Staff also examined academic literature, state criminal justice and drug policy strategies, and reports and policy statements from major national criminal justice-related groups and associations.

Once the topics were established, Authority staff organized them categorically and prioritized strategies for addressing barriers that could potentially generate the greatest impact with the least cost. This process involved another multi-tiered information gathering process including: identifying evidence-based, replicable, measurable, and efficient national and statewide practices, and considering geographically relevant strategies that could be adapted or replicated in Illinois.

The issues covered in the summit agenda are not the only issues identified during advisory meetings, workgroups, interviews, and in the review of the literature. The topics for panel presentations were most commonly identified through the needs assessment process as having the greatest potential for broad system impact, particularly in recognizing ICJIA's mandate within grants administration, research and analysis, policy and planning, and information systems and technology:

The topics are:

- Why You Need the Neighborhood: Ensuring Community Participation in Public Safety
- Smarter Spending: Reducing Spending on Corrections to Increase Public Safety Through Justice Reinvestment
- The Two Hardest Problems: Addressing Drug Abuse and Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System
- Staying Ahead of the Curve: Current Illinois Initiatives
- Letting Success Guide Public Policy
- What You Don't Know CAN Hurt You: Sharing Data and Information through Criminal Justice Partnerships

At the Summit

The two-day summit brings together criminal justice practitioners, policymakers, legislators, service providers, researchers, and community members. Each session provides information about current strategies that can be replicated or adapted in local jurisdictions. The panel sessions present information about effective practices that are multidisciplinary in nature, incorporate promising or evidence-based components; highlight professional development or training models; and support innovative information-sharing standards, policies and practices.

The event will also create cross-disciplinary breakout groups organized by jurisdiction size, with representation across the criminal justice and related health and human services system. These breakout groups will assist in the development of a five-year strategic plan for criminal justice policy and programs, and related health and human services policy and programs. Breakout group participants will begin to determine the feasibility of utilizing the summit presentations within their local environments; and begin to identify the tools, including technical assistance, fiscal resources,

policy or legislation, or technological infrastructure, necessary to garner success.

After the Summit

Post-Summit working groups will convene to develop strategies to address state and local justice-related challenges, including evidence-based or promising practices, cross-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional partnerships, and professional development and training strategies to conserve resources and share information. Working groups will be organized by jurisdiction size, with smaller, medium, and larger sized jurisdictions paired with those of similar-size. Existing plans that overlap with the Authority's responsibilities, such as the Illinois Department of Corrections reform efforts and the Mental Health and Justice Initiative, will be integrated into the Authority's plan.

The Authority will provide facilitators and technical assistance coordinators to the working groups to:

- Help frame specific crime-related issues and other challenges that are identified within the region.
- Provide resources, reference material, web sites, or subject matter experts pertaining to successful and promising policies, programs, and practices.

- Offer perspectives regarding the role of the Authority and other state agencies in implementing the strategies.

Working groups will produce goals, objectives, and action steps for each of the identified problem issues. Specific action steps may pertain to both local and state-level stakeholders, and may include the need for program grants, changes in public policy, additional research, and/or enhancements to information technology. In accordance with the overriding theme of *creating smarter solutions for crime reduction*, the action steps will fall within programs, practices, and policies that:

- Are multijurisdictional and multidisciplinary;
- Are promising or evidence-based; or
- Support professional development and training.

Once the strategic plan elements are generated by the working groups, the Authority staff will compile and synthesize the information to formulate an integrated State of Illinois Criminal Justice Strategic Plan to assist the legislature, state and local policymakers, and practitioners in increasing public safety and in improving the criminal justice system.

For more information about the Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction Strategic Planning Initiative, visit:
<http://www.icjia.org/public/strategy2010>.