



The Illinois Facsimile Network

July 1988

Anytime a criminal suspect is arrested, it is imperative for law enforcement personnel first to positively identify the suspect and then to determine whether he or she has a prior criminal record. A suspect's criminal history is essential to making informed decisions throughout the criminal justice process, particularly if the suspect is a serious or repeat offender.

In Illinois, local criminal justice agencies can quickly establish positive offender identification and obtain criminal history record information through the state's fingerprint facsimile network.

This advisory, the second in a series on criminal history record information in Illinois, describes the vital role of Illinois' facsimile network in identifying and processing criminal offenders and describes the Authority's recent upgrade and expansion of the network.

For the criminal justice system to work effectively, local law enforcement personnel must be able to establish the *positive identification*, or identification through fingerprints, of the crime suspects they arrest. The positive identification of an arrestee is a necessary step in obtaining the individual's complete criminal history record, which in turn is used by police officers, court personnel, correctional officers, and other criminal justice professionals throughout the processing of the arrestee.

At every stage in the criminal justice process, access to accurate, timely positive offender identification and criminal history record information is essential to informed decision-making. The positive identification of arrestees and availability of their full criminal history records are especially crucial during the pretrial stage, for example, during the setting of bond. Since bond hearings generally occur within hours after arrest, the United States Postal Service is not a practical means of obtaining criminal history record information. But without this important information, serious and repeat offenders could be inappropriately released from custody.

The Illinois facsimile, or "fax," network is frequently the only means available for law enforcement and other criminal justice personnel to establish positive identification and to obtain a full criminal history record transcript of an arrestee within a few hours. Using the fax network, criminal justice agencies can transmit fingerprint facsimiles over telephone lines to the Illinois State Police (ISP) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—the state and federal central repositories of criminal history records.¹ At ISP and the

FBI, fingerprint technicians compare the arrestee's fingerprint facsimile against fingerprint cards of arrestees on file. If a match is made, establishing positive identification, personnel at the repository transmit a transcript of the person's criminal history record back over facsimile equipment to the criminal justice agency.

To make this process quicker, easier, and more reliable for local law enforcement, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority recently completed a major upgrade of the Illinois fax network. This initiative, known as the Facsimile Upgrade and Expansion Program, was funded by the federal Justice Assistance Act (JAA) of 1984. One of the main purposes of the JAA was to assist the states in improving the identification and processing of serious and repeat offenders.

The Role of CHRI in Processing Offenders

Access to positive identification and criminal history record information in time for pretrial hearings, while important in processing all offenders, is especially important in processing serious and repeat offenders for several reasons:

- An arrestee's positive identification and criminal history record information can alert law enforcement officers to a serious or repeat offender or to an arrestee who is using an alias.

- State law permits state's attorneys, and law enforcement officers who file cases directly with the court, to upgrade certain charges if the arrestee has one or more prior convictions for the same or a similar offense.
- The arrestee's prior criminal history is an important factor judges use in setting bond amounts. In fact, the chief judges in three Cook County municipal court districts have ordered that every felony arrestee be identified through fingerprints and that their full criminal history record transcript be available when they appear in court for the bond hearing.
- Criminal history record information has become increasingly important in determining whether an arrestee is even eligible for bail. A 1986 amendment to the Illinois Constitution (Article I, Section 9), and the legislation that followed (Ill. Rev. Stat., ch. 38, sec. 1210-6.1), allow judges to deny bail to arrestees who are charged with certain serious offenses and who are determined to pose a "real and present threat to the physical safety of any person." Criminal history record information is one factor judges can use to assess how dangerous an arrestee would be if released. Unless judges have complete and accurate criminal history record information, an arrestee who may be eligible for pretrial detention under the amendment may be given bond and released from custody.
- In certain jurisdictions, defendants identified as repeat offenders can be tried under priority prosecution programs.

After the pretrial stage, criminal history record information continues to be an important resource for criminal justice personnel in processing defendants. Criminal history record information can be considered by a judge when determining an offender's sentence, including the term of incarceration. It also helps correctional officials determine the appropriate security level of an offender's housing assignment.

Advantages of the Illinois Fax Network

The Illinois fax network has four advantages over other statewide and national criminal justice communication systems in providing access to criminal history record information.

- Only fingerprint-based identification systems can establish the *positive identification* of persons, including arrestees using aliases, fugitives, arrestees not identifiable through local records, and unknown deceased persons. The fax network provides a direct link to ISP and the FBI—the state and federal central repositories of criminal history records. Other criminal justice information systems available to local law enforcement agencies, such as the state's Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), do not use fingerprints to access information. For obtaining criminal history record information, a name search through LEADS or NCIC is useful only when the identity of the subject is already known to the local authorities.
- The fax network provides access to a *detailed* criminal history record, not just a summary transcript, which LEADS and NCIC provide. If positive identification of an arrestee is established by the state or federal repository, information

about the person's criminal history is sent back to the agency in the form of a criminal history record transcript, or "rap sheet." The rap sheet is a detailed account of all the arrestee's previously reported contacts with the criminal justice system.

- The Illinois fax network is frequently the only means for obtaining an arrestee's identity and criminal history record information *within a few hours*. Another means is hand-delivering fingerprint cards to ISP. Fingerprint cards can also be sent to ISP by mail, but this could take more than a week.
- Finally, the fax network does more than enable law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and other criminal justice personnel throughout the state to transmit fingerprints and receive criminal history record information. The network allows officials to quickly exchange other types of documents, such as photographs and official correspondence. This can help local agencies identify or locate suspects and share information about important developments in a criminal investigation, for example.

The Facsimile Network Upgrade and Expansion

In 1984 Governor James R. Thompson designated the Authority to administer the federal Justice Assistance Act (JAA) program in Illinois. One objective of the JAA is to assist the states in establishing programs to improve the identification and processing of serious and repeat offenders. With assistance from the Authority, the Cook County Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission examined the problem of identifying and processing serious and repeat offenders in Cook County.

The commission concluded that a coordinated, systemwide approach to information sharing was essential to the Illinois criminal justice system, especially in Cook County. One of the pro-

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Figure 1. The Illinois Facsimile Network

There are 49 fingerprint facsimile host sites in Illinois—including 28 in Cook County. Eight additional sites throughout the state can send and receive documents other than fingerprint facsimiles.

Facsimile Sites in Cook County

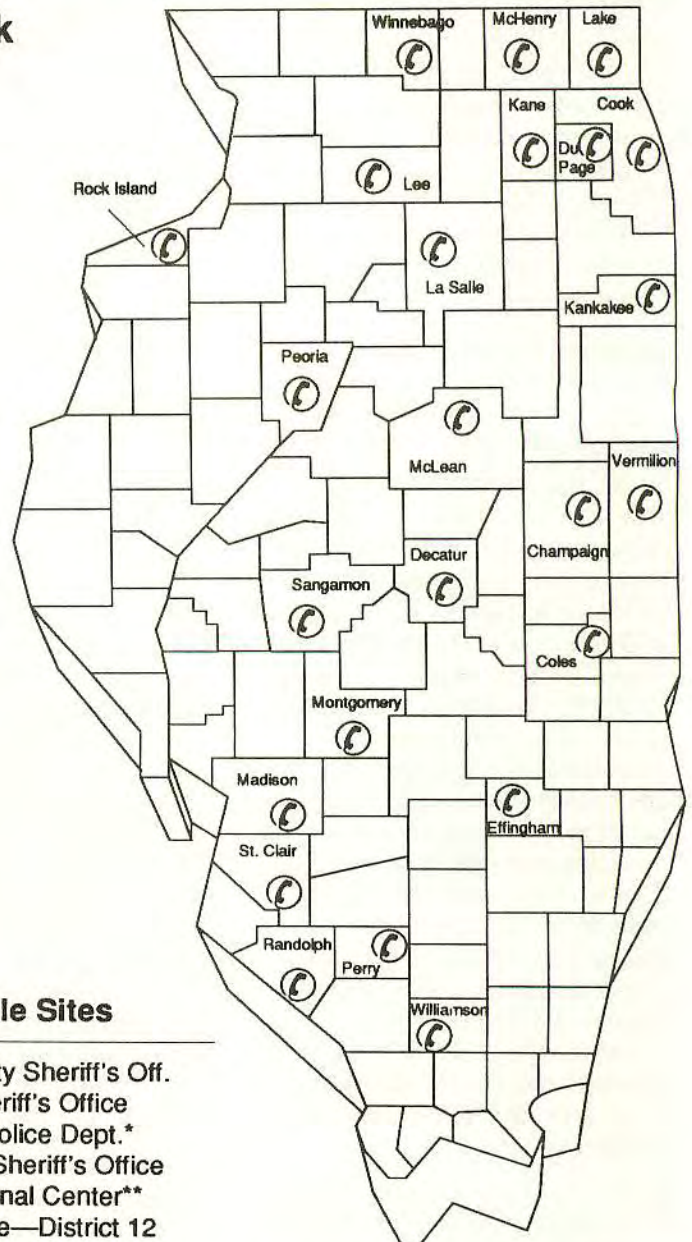
Nine new sites in bold

Arlington Heights Police Dept.
 Bridgeview Police Dept.
Buffalo Grove Police Dept.
 Calumet City Police Dept.
 Chicago Police Dept.
 Chicago Heights Police Dept.
 Cook County Sheriff's Police—
 Fugitive Warrants Section
 Cook County Sheriff's Police
 (Maywood)
 Cook County State's Attorney's
 Office*
 Des Plaines Police Dept.
 Evanston Police Dept.
Evergreen Park Police Dept.
 Harvey Police Dept.
Homewood Police Dept.
 Illinois State Police—Division of
 Criminal Investigation (Chicago)*
 La Grange Police Dept.
 Melrose Park Police Dept.**
 Mt. Prospect Police Dept.*
North Riverside Police Dept.
Northbrook Police Dept.
 Northeastern Metropolitan
 Enforcement Group*
 Northlake Police Dept.
Oak Forest Police Dept.
 Oak Lawn Police Dept.
 Oak Park Police Dept.
Orland Park Police Dept.
Palos Heights Police Dept.
Park Ridge Police Dept.
 Schaumburg Police Dept.
 Skokie Police Dept.
 U.S. Drug Enforcement Admin.**

Other Facsimile Sites

Champaign County Sheriff's Off.
 Coles County Sheriff's Office
 Downers Grove Police Dept.*
 Du Page County Sheriff's Office
 Graham Correctional Center**
 Illinois State Police—District 12
 (Effingham)
 ISP—District 17 (LaSalle)
 ISP— Division of Criminal Investi-
 gation (Elmhurst)*
 ISP— Division of Criminal Investi-
 gation (Springfield)*
 Kane County Sheriff's Office
 Kankakee County Sheriff's Off.
 Lake County Sheriff's Office
 Lee County Courthouse
 Madison County Probation Dept.
 McHenry County Sheriff's Off.

McLean County Sheriff's Off.
 Menard Correctional Center**
 Peoria County Sheriff's Office
 Perry County Courthouse
 Rock Island County Sheriff's Off.
 Sangamon County Sheriff's Off.
 St. Clair County Court Services
 and Probation
 Vermilion County Sheriff's Off.
 Vernon Hills Police Dept.*
 Williamson County Sheriff's Off.
 Winnebago County Sheriff's Off.



*Not a fingerprint transmission site and not funded through the Authority's Facsimile Network and Expansion Program

**Not funded through the Authority's Facsimile Network and Expansion Program

grams proposed by the commission was the Facsimile Network Upgrade and Expansion. This program was designed to facilitate the identification of *all* felony offenders, as well as those misdemeanants who could not be identified by local records, and to promote the use of criminal history record information by judges at bond hearings. Federal funds were awarded to the Cook County Sheriff's Office and ISP to implement the program.

The Need for Network Improvements

The Illinois fax network was established in 1975 by ISP, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, the Chicago Police Department, and the Chicago Crime Commission. A statewide expansion of the network was then begun in 1977 as a result of efforts by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission (ILEC), the Authority's predecessor agency. With federal money, ILEC purchased 36 sets of fingerprint facsimile equipment and installed them in each of the state's judicial circuits and in an additional 15 sites in Cook County. This equipment allowed law enforcement agencies to submit fingerprints to the state and federal central repositories of criminal history records over ordinary telephone lines.

After almost a decade since the equipment was first installed, however, the fax network had developed some weaknesses:

- Due to advances in the capabilities of facsimile equipment during the past few years, the technology of the original facsimile equipment had become outdated. The original receiver could only receive information, while a new device called a *transceiver*—a combined transmitter and receiver—could both send and receive information. Also, the resolution of the copy produced by the original receiver was inferior to the copy quality of the newer transceiver.

- Due to repeated use, the facsimile equipment in many sites had become prone to mechanical failures, and criminal history transcripts produced by this equipment were often illegible.
- Because of the high volume of arrests and the limited number of fax sites in Cook County, obtaining criminal history record information often required too much personnel time, particularly for those agencies located far from a fax host site.

The Upgrade Program

The fax network improvement consisted of three parts: 1) adding new facsimile sites, 2) replacing old facsimile equipment with new, and 3) offering substantial discounts to local law enforcement agencies on transceivers.

Nine new sites added. To facilitate increased use of the fax network by law enforcement agencies in suburban Cook County, nine new fax host sites were established there in the summer of 1986 (see Figure 1). The sites were selected by the Authority based on recommendations from the various Cook County chiefs of police associations. The Authority also considered both the volume of arrest activity and location of each site to ensure that agencies with the greatest need would have the easiest access to the fax network and that no agency would have far to travel.

Old Equipment Replaced. The original facsimile equipment consisted of two separate units: a fingerprint transmitter and a receiver. Due to problems associated with the age of the receivers, they were replaced with transceivers in all of the 36 original fax sites.

Transceivers, which can both receive and transmit documents, have several other advantages over the old receivers:

- Transceivers produce document facsimiles in less than 30 seconds a page; the old receivers took as long as three minutes a page. Faster transmission time also reduces telecommunication costs.

- The transceivers conform to CCITT (Consultative Committee on International Telephone and Telegraph) Group III telecommunications standards, so local law enforcement agencies can use them to communicate with any other agencies owning facsimile equipment, regardless of the vendor, make, or model.
- The new transceivers produce copies with better resolution than the old receivers, which has eliminated previous problems with the legibility of documents (see figures 2 and 3).
- An automatic operating feature on the new equipment means that personnel do not have to oversee the receipt of documents.

Since the Illinois fax network depends on ISP's Bureau of Identification (BOI) to provide law enforcement agencies throughout the state with positive offender identification information and criminal history record information, new transceivers were installed in the BOI as well. In addition to providing better-quality criminal history record transcripts to local law enforcement agencies, the new, high-speed equipment has helped the BOI to transmit the increased number of facsimile submissions quickly and efficiently.

Buy-In Option Offered. To further promote participation in the fax network, the Authority offered law enforcement agencies in Cook County the opportunity to purchase their own transceivers at the same low bid price obtained by the state program. Now, any law enforcement agency in Illinois can take advantage of the buy-in option.

The transceivers allow agencies to send facsimiles of documents and photographs to any other agency in the network. Agencies can also receive documents, including criminal history record transcripts, from ISP and the

FBI at their own offices. However, because transceivers do not transmit fingerprint images with sufficient resolution, fingerprints still must be sent from a fax site equipped with a fingerprint transmitter. Yet, having its own transceiver saves the local agency a second trip to the fax host site and additional waiting time there to receive a response from the state or federal central repository.

Since the buy-in option was offered, three law enforcement agencies have joined the facsimile network by purchasing their own transceivers.

The Illinois Fax Network Today

The current Illinois fax network includes a total of 49 fingerprint transmission sites that are linked to ISP, to the FBI, and to one another (see figure 1).² Eight additional sites are linked to the network, but are not fingerprint transmission sites.³ The Authority has also recently designated funds to expand the number of fax sites in Du Page County. Illinois is one of the few states nationwide with a network that allows local law enforcement agencies to exchange criminal justice information with one another quickly and easily over facsimile equipment.

ISP administers the actual operation of the fax network 24 hours a day and seven days a week through the BOI. In 1987, the BOI processed a total of 27,677 fingerprint facsimile submissions. The importance of the fax network and ISP's responsibility to support its operation is exemplified by the increasing numbers of monthly submissions throughout 1987 (see Figure 4).

ISP maintains a toll-free telephone number as a service to fax network user agencies. Thus, the telecommunication costs of sending fingerprints and receiving criminal history record information are absorbed by ISP. In addition, ISP provides paper to the grant-established fax sites for the facsimile equipment.

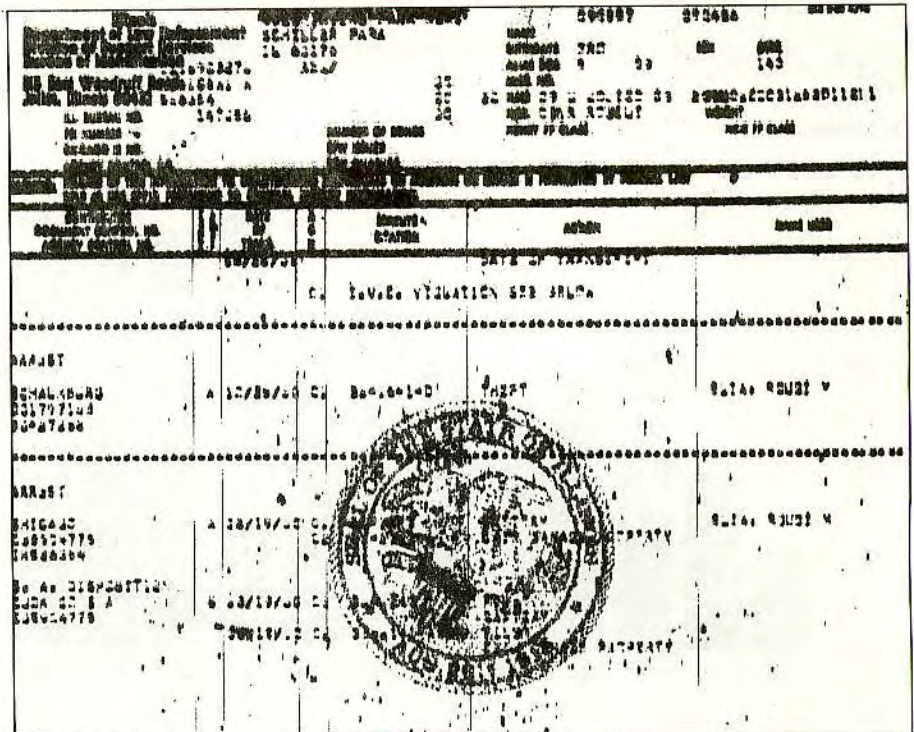


Figure 2. (above) Criminal history record transcript sent over old receiver.

ILLINOIS STATE POLICE
CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION
SUBJECT TRANSACTION INFORMATION

SID: IL99887760

FBI: CHICAGO: 1R998877

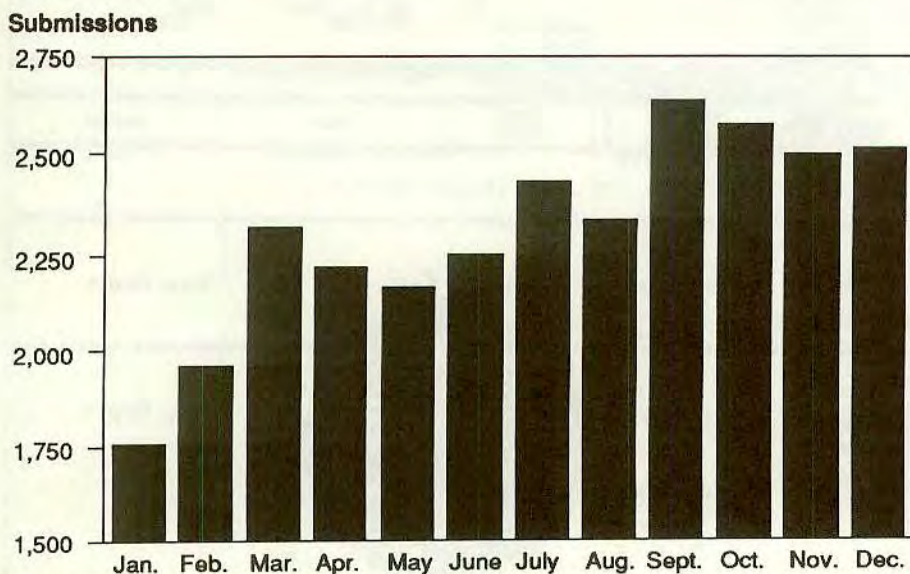
AGENCY INFORMATION	SUBJECT INFORMATION	DATE	CHARGE INFORMATION
ARREST ILO166600 MATTESON PD DCN 09647075 AGENCY CASE# 86077	11/31/1967	03/26/87	38-18A-3 RETAIL THEFT
ARREST ILCP0000 CHICAGO PD DCN CB000002		11/14/81	38-18-2 ARMED ROBBERY
S.A. DISPOSITION ILO16013A COOK COUNTY SA DCN CB000002		11/14/81	CHARGE FILED 38-18-2 ARMED ROBBERY
COURT DISPOSITION ILO160253 COOK CO CIR CRT DCN CB000002		12/14/81	GUILTY 38-18-2 ARMED ROBBERY
	SENTENCED	12/14/81	SENTENCED TO PROBATION 2 YEARS
ARREST ILCP0000 CHICAGO PD DCN CB000001		09/15/81	38-18-2 ARMED ROBBERY

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Figure 3. (left) Criminal history record transcript sent over new transceiver.

Figure 4: Fingerprint facsimile submissions to the Illinois State Police, 1987



Source: Illinois State Police facsimile data

Because of its responsibility to establish programs and policies to improve the coordination of criminal justice information, the Authority is involved in the coordination of the fax network throughout the state, determines the appropriate host locations for the equipment, and monitors the network's performance.

The Equipment

Each host site is supplied with two pieces of facsimile equipment: a fingerprint transmitter and a transceiver.

The fingerprint transmitter is used to send fingerprint facsimiles to ISP and the FBI. The transceiver is used to receive identification and criminal history record information back from ISP and the FBI and to exchange—send and receive—written materials with agencies linked through the network.

The fingerprint transmitter uses an analog scheme to transmit signals; the transceiver uses a digital scheme. A fingerprint image recorded by the analog equipment looks similar to a photograph: it captures the detail and full grey-scale shading of the fingerprint image. Unlike fingerprint images produced by the analog equipment, the images from digital signals are not detailed enough to be classified by fingerprint technicians at ISP and the FBI.

A fingerprint card can be transmitted by the fingerprint transmitter in either nine or 14 minutes. The fingerprint transmitter operator selects the transmission speed depending on the quality of the original fingerprint. A good, clear original fingerprint can be transmitted at the faster speed.

How the Network Works

From the Host Site. To transmit fingerprints to ISP or the FBI through the Illinois fax network, an agency must take the fingerprint card to the nearest fax host site, which is equipped with a fingerprint transmitter.

At the fax site, the facsimile equipment operator uses a regular telephone connected to the facsimile equipment to call the receiving agency—the BOI, for example. When the phone call is answered at the BOI, the facsimile equipment at the host site and at the bureau automatically become synchronized. After the connection is made, transmission of the fingerprint card can begin.

The operator places the fingerprint card in the transmitter, which then electronically scans it. The transmitter converts all the information on the card, including the minute detail of the fingerprint image, into electronic signals that are transmitted over the telephone lines and received by a fingerprint facsimile recorder at the BOI.

At the state or federal central repository. The fingerprint facsimile recorder at the BOI records the fingerprint image and the other information on the fingerprint card on photosensitive paper.

If subject identifiers—for example, name, sex, race, and date of birth—or an ISP or FBI identification number accompany the fingerprints on the card, the BOI conducts a computerized search for a match on the identifiers. The more information about the subject the agency sends to the BOI, the more likely an exact match can be found if the person has a previous criminal record. In the event of a computer "hit," or match on the subject identifiers, the BOI retrieves the master fingerprint card for the matched record and compares it to the subject's fingerprint card. When a match is found, positive identification of the subject has been established.

Attempts to establish positive identification of the arrestee could take longer when 1) no information about the subject accompanies the fingerprints, 2) no hit results from the computerized search, or 3) the subject identifier hits do not result in a fingerprint match (for example, when the arrestee is using an alias or is a first-time offender).

In these situations, the arrestee's fingerprints must be classified by fingerprint technicians at the BOI. After classification, the fingerprints are manually checked against records of fingerprints with the same classification. It may take longer to find a match for common fingerprint classifications because there are more fingerprint records to check.

When a fingerprint match is made and positive identification of the subject is established, the person's rap sheet is sent back to the requesting agency over the BOI's transceiver. The rap sheet is either sent back to the fax host site or directly to the requesting agency if the agency has its own transceiver.

If no match is made on the arrestee's fingerprints, a "no record" response is sent back to the agency and the person is considered a first-time offender.

If the fingerprint facsimile received by the BOI is illegible—because the original fingerprints were of poor quality, for example—the BOI will return a response to the requesting agency stamped “unclassifiable.”

ISP maintains records of all identification requests, including the type of response (for example, no record, unclassifiable prints, rap sheet sent, etc.) and the agency that received the information. However, the fingerprint facsimiles received by ISP and the FBI are not entered into their permanent records. Local agencies are still required to mail the original arrest fingerprint card to ISP for all suspects who are arrested, so that the criminal history event can be maintained as part of the individual’s criminal history record.

How long does it take? The entire process of submitting fingerprints to ISP’s Bureau of Identification and receiving a response back through the fax network takes an average of 55 minutes, based on the BOI’s response times during the first quarter of 1988. If positive identification cannot be established or the fingerprints are unclassifiable, the BOI usually sends back a response right away.

Getting a rap sheet from the BOI when positive identification has been established takes longer than receiving an “unclassifiable” or “no record” response, because of activities associated with generating a complete rap sheet. Even so, it still normally takes less than an hour. If mechanical problems occur—with the printer or the computer system, for example—it can take longer.

User Agency Responsibilities

Because the Illinois fax network is a vital law enforcement tool, user agencies must follow policies and procedures established by ISP and the FBI, in conjunction with other criminal justice agencies. These guidelines benefit the entire criminal justice system.

Use of the Fax Network. To maximize the efficiency and usefulness of the fax network, the network should be used only for the identification of felony offenders and any locally unidentifiable misdemeanants and only when a fast response is necessary or in an emer-

gency situation—for example, for the identification of a suspected felon prior to a bond hearing.

The FBI also provides criminal history record information through the fax network as a service to the criminal justice community; however, due to limited resources, the FBI requests that Illinois agencies first submit a suspect’s fingerprints to ISP before requesting identification information from the FBI.

Routine criminal justice requests—such as those involving pre-sentence investigations and other requests where time is not critical—should not be made through the fax network.

Equipment Maintenance. It is important that the facsimile equipment be kept in good working order. The host sites are required to purchase maintenance contracts with both the fingerprint transmitter vendor and the transceiver vendor to ensure that the equipment at the site is operational at all times. The host sites must also make the facsimile equipment available to other criminal justice agencies 24 hours a day and must not move, disconnect, or relinquish the equipment without prior notification of and approval by the Authority. Finally, the host sites must cooperate with the Authority in any evaluation of the fax network.

Conclusion

Access to positive offender identification and criminal history record information is essential for police, prosecutors, judges, and correctional managers to make informed decisions regarding the processing of criminal suspects. The Facsimile Upgrade and Expansion has enhanced the ability of criminal justice personnel to access this vital information by providing additional fax sites and reducing the distance and time required to submit fingerprints and receive criminal history record transcripts. In addition, the installation of new, high-speed facsimile equipment in all of the sites provides criminal justice personnel throughout the state with high-quality criminal history record transcripts.

All of these improvements, together with the opportunity for local agencies to purchase their own transceivers affordably, have encouraged more local agency participation in the facsimile communication network. The result is more informed decision making on the part of criminal justice personnel, and a more effective system-wide response to the problem of identifying and processing serious and repeat offenders.

For more information about the Illinois fingerprint facsimile network contact the Bureau of Identification at the Illinois State Police, 260 North Chicago Street, Joliet, Illinois, 60431, 815-740-5160.

Notes

¹See *Illinois’ Computerized Criminal History Information System: An Overview*, the first bulletin in this series, for a discussion of the importance of maintaining complete and accurate criminal history record information at the state and federal repositories.

²Apart from the Authority’s network expansion, the following agencies have joined the fax network by purchasing their own fingerprint transmitters: the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Chicago office of ISP’s Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the Graham and Menard Correctional Centers, and the Melrose Park Police Department.

³The eight sites are the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office; the Chicago, Elmhurst, and Springfield offices of ISP’s Division of Criminal Investigation; the Downers Grove, Vernon Hills, and Mt. Prospect police departments; and the Northeastern Metropolitan Enforcement Group. Three of these sites obtained transceivers by participating in the Authority’s buy-in option.

Other Publications of Interest

In addition to other publications in this series, other Authority publications about criminal history record information in particular and the criminal justice system in general are available.

The Authority has performed several audits of the criminal history record information system in Illinois. The following reports on those audits are available:

- Annual Audit Report 1985-1986: Court Disposition Reporting and Processing (*December 1986, 51 pp.*)
- Annual Audit Report for 1984-1985: Illinois' Computerized Criminal History System (*August 1985, 62 pp.*)
- The 1984-85 Audit of Illinois' Computerized Criminal History System (*August 1985, 8 pp.*)
- Annual Audit Report for 1982-1983: Data Quality of Computerized Criminal Histories (*October 1983, 75 pp.*)

Additional Authority publications on the criminal justice system in general are also available:

- Trends and Issues: Criminal and Juvenile Justice in Illinois (*September 1987, 126 pp.*)
- How to Trace Crimes Through the Illinois Criminal Justice System (*July 1981, 75 pp.*)
- Introduction to Illinois Uniform Crime Reports (*May 1985, 16 pp.*)
- The Pretrial Process in Cook County: An Analysis of Bond Decisions Made in Felony Cases During 1982-83 (*August 1987, 93 pp.*)
- Repeat Offenders in Illinois: Recidivism Among Different Types of Prison Releasees (*June 1987, 16 pp.*)
- The Impact of Prior Criminal History on Recidivism in Illinois (*July 1986, 12 pp.*)
- The Pace of Recidivism in Illinois (*April 1986, 16 pp.*)
- Repeat Offenders in Illinois (*November 1985, 16 pp.*)

The first publication in this series, *Illinois' Computerized Criminal History Information System: An Overview*, was published in March 1988.

Future publications in this CHRI series will cover the following topics:

- Uniform disposition reporting law
- Form and manner of CHRI reporting
- Post-sentence fingerprinting



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