



Research Bulletin

Vol. 5, No. 4

November 2006

Audit shows improvement in record accuracy, timeliness, completeness

By Susan Williams, ICJIA research analyst

Criminal history records must provide an accurate account of an individual's past encounters with the criminal justice system. Accurate, timely, and complete records help ensure officer safety, especially upon officer notification of previous weapon violations or violent crime convictions. Criminal history records also are used for background checks related to employment, adoption, citizenship, and firearm purchases.

The Illinois State Police Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) system is the fifth largest records database in the country. The Authority conducts periodic audits of the state's central criminal record repository

to verify compliance with government funding and statutory standards.

The 2006 CHRI Audit Report examined the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of electronic record transmissions to the Illinois State Police's (ISP) Computerized Criminal History (CCH) system between 1991 and 2001. A particular focus was placed on submissions from county sheriff's offices. The findings presented address the following areas:

- The completeness and accuracy of sheriff's department arrest submissions forwarded to ISP's CCH system.
- The timeliness of arrest submissions posted to the CCH system.
- The impact of electronic reporting on timeliness and posting the event.

In 1997, ISP initiated a project to redesign the CHRI system using federal National Criminal History Identification Program grant funds. Testing of the new system began in 1998, and ISP began using an upgraded Automated Fingerprint Identification System in conjunction with a reconfigured computerized criminal history record identification system.

The system allows electronic receipt and transfer of demographic and fingerprint arrest data from local law enforcement entities to the ISP via livescan. The booking process involves entering a subject's demographic information into an automated system, and then downloading it into a livescan device that captures and transmits digital fingerprint images to ISP. This allows ISP to transmit identification responses within hours.

ICJIA

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Sheldon Sorosky, Chairman
Lori G. Levin, Executive Director

Research Bulletins are published periodically by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. They focus on research conducted by or for the Authority on a topic of interest to Illinois criminal justice professionals and policymakers.

This project was supported by grants #01-DB-BX-0017 and #02-DB-BX-0017, awarded to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

For more information about this or other publications from the Authority, please contact the Authority's Criminal Justice Information Clearinghouse at 312-793-8550, or visit our website at www.icjia.state.il.us

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, November 2006.

Table 1
Criminal submissions to CCH, calendar year 2005

Fingerprint-based submissions	Electronic submissions	Paper submissions	Total
Arrest (adult)	459,695	74,370	534,065
Arrest (juvenile)	37,657	7,613	45,270
Custodial receipt	8,440	43,765	52,205
Total	505,792	125,748	631,540
Non-fingerprint-based disposition submissions	All submissions		
State's attorney filing decisions	396,447		
Court disposition	395,860		
Custodial status change	78,551		
Total	870,858		
Grand total submissions			1,502,398

Source: Illinois State Police Bureau of Identification, March 2001

Volume of electronic submissions

In 2005, 82 percent of the more than 1.5 million records submitted to ISP were entered electronically (Table 1). Illinois is committed to electronic criminal history record reporting, and electronic arrest submissions have increased about 20 percent across the state since 2001, the last year of the audit time frame.

Accuracy, timeliness, and completeness

Errors may occur at various stages of the criminal history record submission process. Errors may be made by the submitting agency completing the form; in posting the data to the CCH database; or in the manner by which CHRI events are linked and disseminated to users of the information.

The quality of CHRI data is critical and must reflect an accurate and complete account of an offender's encounters with criminal justice agencies. The accuracy and completeness of CHRI data depends both on reporting agency submissions and ISP's ability to accurately add the information to the CCH system.

To evaluate the completeness and timeliness components of the audit, each event from arrest to custodial information, if applicable, was examined to determine whether all required dispositions were posted within required time frames.

As mandated in the Criminal Identification Act, all law enforcement agencies, state's attorneys, circuit clerks, and the Illinois Department of Corrections must submit arrest charge disposition and custodial information within required time frames. Fingerprint-based information must be submitted within 24 hours for felony and Class A and B misdemeanor arrests, and also for juvenile arrests (ages 10 and older) for offenses that would be considered felonies if committed by an adult. State's attorney charge decisions must be submitted within 30 days of the decision. Court dispositions and sentences must be submitted within 30 days. Custodial facilities must report the status change of a subject when sentenced to the facility within 30 days.

The timeliness measurement of the 2006 CHRI audit was designed specifically for electronic reporting

Table 2
Records audited for completeness by submission type and year, 1999-2001

Submission type	1999	2000	2001	Total
Livescan	183 (27%)	467 (63%)	783 (74%)	1,433 (58%)
Paper	503 (73%)	272 (37%)	280 (26%)	1,055 (42%)
Total	686	739	1,063	2,488

submissions. When local agencies submit arrests to the CCH system they can elect to have responses relayed back to them automatically via the Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS). The responses note the date and time that arrests post to the CCH system, along with the arrest date and other identifying arrest event information. From the LEADS responses, the elapsed time between the arrest and posting dates can be calculated.

Livescan user feedback submitted to ISP in recent years helped pinpoint several potential problem areas investigated in the audit, including:

- Lack of availability of adequate charging statute citations to the livescan user.
- Inability of local agencies to know whether ISP is experiencing technical difficulties, and therefore unable to receive data or send out responses.
- Cumbersome procedures for submitting corrections to records already submitted.
- Non-uniformity of practices across agencies in handling warrant arrests.
- Lack of flexibility in changing Arresting Agency Originating Agency Identifier (OAI) from Submitting Agency OAI.

Audit finding highlights

The overall accuracy rate of livescan CCH entries was 91 percent, an improvement over the 87 percent accuracy rate revealed in the 2003 audit. Name, statute

citation, and class of offense continued to be problematic data fields.

The CCH records overall completeness rate was 70 percent. A previous audit revealed completeness rate of 74 percent.

Electronically submitted records tended to have lower disposition completeness rates than those submitted via paper. Auditors indicated lowest completeness rates were recorded when state’s attorney information was expected (57 percent).

Overall warrant arrest completeness remained at about 65 percent between 1994 and 2001. Warrant arrests submitted electronically had lower completeness rates than those submitted via paper forms.

Most livescan arrests in the timeliness sample were posted on CCH and made available to users within 24 hours of arrest (92 percent).

Audit recommendation highlights

Auditors made the following recommendations to improve criminal history record timeliness and accuracy.

- 1) ISP should implement an active reporting monitoring system to routinely check reporting levels of contributing agencies.
- 2) ISP should provide more consistent and timely feedback to local agencies when systemic problems are detected, and should test automated edit routines on a regular basis to ensure data is being accurately transmitted and posted.

3) ISP should make available livescan rejection reports. This would allow identification of local agency operator problems and ensure resubmission of records rejected by ISP due to errors.

4) ISP should develop policies on livescan data retention practices. Some local agencies may employ informal methods to determine whether reporting forms have been sent. However, these methods may not be sufficient for auditing or problem-solving purposes.

5) A more comprehensive livescan certification process should be implemented to determine whether all data meet quality standards. Accountability for the accuracy of criminal history information in the CCH database is shifting to submitting agencies. To enable the livescan system to operate as intended, the system should be integrated with any existing or proposed automated booking, records management, or information system for data entry. This internal integrated process should be included in certification to ensure all applications are compatible and submissions of events are successfully posted onto the CCH database.

6) At a local level, enhanced communication and coordination should be encouraged between the various reporting agencies regarding disposition reporting. More training on CHRI reporting procedures within the environment of new technology is also recommended. Local agencies may need additional training on technological reporting advances, including electronically integrating reporting processes and procedures within their county. The audit revealed that the flow of CHRI information was interrupted in some counties when new technology was introduced, resulting in profoundly negative effects on the completeness of CHRI data.

7) ISP should continue to encourage agencies to use livescan technology for arrest submissions to ensure timely processing. State funding opportunities should be made available for equipment purchase and maintenance.

8) ISP should continue to work on enhanced communication capabilities with local agencies. A reliable mechanism is needed to inform local agencies when ISP's systems are down and a record has not been successfully transmitted.

Conclusion

Audit findings pointed to marked improvement in CCH record accuracy and timeliness of electronically submitted records since redesign of the system in 1999. With implementation of livescan technology, about 85 percent of arrest records are electronically submitted to the CCH database, up from 63 percent in 1999.

While this audit's overall accuracy rate betters that of the 2003 audit, any vendor software problems can impact the accuracy of a large proportion of the CCH database in a relatively short time.

Serious disconnect existed in the earlier years of implementation between arrest reporting and disposition reporting to CCH for electronically reported records in at least four counties included in the audit. As a consequence, the overall completeness rate of electronically submitted CCH records was found to be lower in this audit. ISP needs to be more proactive in monitoring CHRI reporting processes at the local level when new technology is introduced.