

The Compiler

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Summer 1994

Inside

Features

Criminal history record information 4

A look at the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Dispositional Reporting

Assessing the quality of data 8

An examination of how states are ensuring accurate and complete criminal history record information

Developing new information paths 13

A look at how the FBI is expanding current capabilities

Departments

In Brief 2

Legal Consequences 15

Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention 17

Trends 20

Criminal history records: Keeping track



Photo courtesy of Chicago Police Department crime lab

When six members of George "Bugs" Moran's gang were gunned down in Chicago on Valentine's Day, 1929, the American public was outraged. It had been a particularly violent month, and citizens who had read about several dozen murders in that time span were sick of the violence. In the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre case, police were able to identify the killers by their fingerprints, but the public demanded that more be done to track future criminals.

The uproar led to passage of a bill by the Illinois legislature on July 2, 1931, that created a state Bureau of Identification. In the first year of its existence, the Bureau obtained 30,000 fingerprint cards. In June 1932, the first rap sheets materialized, and by World War II, the number of stored criminal records had skyrocketed.

This issue of *The Compiler* details how far criminal history records have come since the 1930s and outlines what still needs to be done to improve them. Our series begins on page 4 with a look at criminal history record information.

Baker is new executive director

On July 1, Thomas F. Baker assumed the position of executive director of the Authority. His appointment came after Executive Director Dennis E. Nowicki resigned on April 1, 1994. Nowicki was appointed by Governor Edgar in February 1992.

Baker comes to the Authority armed with more than 25 years of experience in the criminal justice field. He received his bachelor's and j.d. degrees from Loyola University of Chicago in 1964 and 1967, respectively. Baker was appointed to complete an unexpired term as State's Attorney for McHenry County in 1986 and was elected to a full term in 1988. A former presiding Juvenile Court judge, Baker had been privately practicing law since 1992.

About his interest in the Authority, Baker said, "My long association with the criminal justice system, the knowledge and reputation of the Authority as being one of the finest agencies in the state, and seeing it as a challenge, an opportunity to possibly do some good for the system, made me want to come."

Governor Edgar said, "(Baker's) record coupled with his formal training and experience in the private practice of law make him a valuable addition to the Edgar Administration."

In the interim period, Candice Kane served as acting executive director. Kane, who has been with the Authority since 1984, has since resumed her position at the Authority as associate director, Federal and State Grants Unit. Said Edgar, "I want to thank Candice for her work in keeping the agency on course over the past several months."



Thomas F. Baker

Kristi Turnbaugh

Baker said, "I've enjoyed the very short time I've been here, meeting the people who make the agency run and those it serves and learning many facets of the agency I wasn't entirely aware of."

Przybylski is new associate director

Roger K. Przybylski assumed the role of Associate Director of the Research and Analysis Unit in May. He replaces John R. Firman, who served as associate director for nearly 10 years. Firman is now Director of Research of the International Association of Chief of Police in Alexandria, Virginia.

During his tenure, Firman received many accolades and awards for the unit's research and evaluation work. Especially noted was his supervision of the Authority's three volumes of *Trends and Issues*, reports examining the criminal and juvenile justice systems in Illinois. The 1988 edition was one of four reports awarded the Philip Hoke Award for Excellence in Analysis by the Justice Research and Statistics Association.

Przybylski originally joined the Authority in 1985. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in Administration of Criminal Justice from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Before being appointed associate director, Przybylski served as the Authority's director of the Information Resource Center for several years. He left to take a research position with the Chicago Police Department last year. He has written numerous reports on drug-related topics and has received many awards for his criminal justice research.

Agencies join law enforcement system

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's Area-Wide Law Enforcement Radio Terminal System (ALERTS) recently has added 17 new users. The in-car terminal network provides police officers with instant access to national, state and local crime information.

The Champaign County Sheriff's Department and Rantoul Police Department have joined the Champaign County area network. The McLean Police Department has joined the McLean/Tazewell county area, and the Rockford Park Police Department has joined the Rockford area network. In the Chicago metropolitan area, the DuPage County Sheriff's Police and Will County Sheriff's Police have joined ALERTS. The Waukegan, Chicago Heights, Oakwood Hills, River Forest, Fox Valley Park District, Oak Park, Plainfield, Cicero, Lisle, McCook and Darien police departments also have joined the Chicago area.

The Compiler

Volume 14, Number 1

THE COMPILER is published quarterly by authority of the State of Illinois by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Jim Edgar
Governor

Peter B. Bensinger
Chairman

Thomas F. Baker
Executive Director



Sharon Bond
Senior Editor

Mark Myrent
Assistant Editor

Jamilah Owens
Jeffrey Travis
Kristi Turnbaugh
Staff

Authority Members

Jane Rae Buckwalter
Associate Vice Chancellor
for Administration
University of Illinois at Chicago

Roland Burris
Illinois Attorney General

Barbara Engel
Victim Advocate

Richard J. Mark
President and CEO
St. Mary's Hospital
of East St. Louis, Inc.

Terrance Gainer
Director
Illinois State Police

Norbert Goetten
Director
Office of the State's Attorneys
Appellate Prosecutor

Robert Nail
Sheriff of Adams County

Jack O'Malley
State's Attorney of Cook County

Howard Peters III
Director
Illinois Department of Corrections

Roger Richards
Chief
Fairview Heights Police Department

Matt Rodriguez
Superintendent
Chicago Police Department

Michael Sheahan
Sheriff of Cook County

Arthur Smith Sr.
Chicago Police Board

Michael Waller
State's Attorney of Lake County

Printed using soybean-based ink
Recycled paper

Printing order number: 94-1a
Number of copies: 9,000
ISSN 1059-6569

New members named to Authority, MVTPC

In May, Governor Edgar appointed Richard J. Mark to the Authority. The Collinsville resident, 38, is president and CEO of St. Mary's Hospital of East St. Louis, Inc. Mark replaces Wyatt Frazer. Appointed to the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council by Governor Edgar in July was Steven Allendorf, 38, of Galena. He is the sheriff for Jo Daviess County and replaces Jim Donahue in the position.

Candice Kane receives C4 Service Award

Described as the "architect of sexual assault advocacy services in Illinois," Candice Kane recently received the Community Counseling Centers of Chicago 1994 Service Award. As the Authority's associate director of the Federal and State Grants Unit, Kane fought to target funds obtained from the Victims of Crime Act for community sexual assault advocacy services across the state. Community Counseling Centers of Chicago receive approximately \$28,000 annually in VOCA funds.

"Because of her personal and professional commitment to addressing the issue of sexual assault, providers throughout the state have been able to advance their goals of improving the criminal justice system's response to this crime, as well as increasing advocacy on behalf of individual survivors," said Anthony A. Kopera, CEO of C4. Kopera added that Kane is largely responsible for the availability and quality of advocacy services for sexual assault survivors north of the Loop, where C4's sexual assault services center is located. "Community Counseling Centers of Chicago is honored to recognize her contributions with its 1994 Service Award," he said.

NIJ releases report

The U.S. Department of Justice has released *Questions and Answers in Lethal and Non-Lethal Violence*, a 230-page report detailing the second intensive Workshop of the Homicide Research Working Group. Fifty-one of the group's 250 members, made up of homicide researchers and policy experts, met from June 13 to 17, 1993, at the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. The report addresses the theme *Public Health and Public Safety — Linking Data, Coordinating Resources and Learning from Differing Approaches*.

The report, edited by Authority Senior Research Analyst Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard L. Block of Loyola University, tackles topics in public health and safety, intervention strategies based on data analysis, reviews of homicide data sets, spatial analysis and victim participation. Topics include findings on life chances of becoming a homicide victim, assessment of the relationship between drugs and violence and data sets for the study of lynching.

Street Gang Crime report released

Carolyn Rebecca Block, a senior research analyst with the Authority, and her husband and colleague Richard Block co-authored a recent National Institute of Justice Research Brief titled *Street*

Gang Crime in Chicago. The report provides an analysis of Chicago Police Department homicide records over the last 26 years and other gang-motivated incident records over three years. The Blocks' analysis reveals the street gang affiliation of every offender and each gang's location, providing a detailed examination of Chicago gang activity.

The 12-page report classifies street gang-related criminal activity into three distinct categories: *turf hot spots*, where territory battles occur; *drug hot spots*, where the activity is motivated by control and flow of narcotics; and the combination of *turf and drug hot spots*, where criminal motivation can be tied to both areas. Other findings show that only four of Chicago's gangs were responsible for more than 69 percent of recorded criminal incidents and that firearms were the lethal weapons used in almost all street gang-motivated homicides.

Violence Against Women report released

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has released a National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) report, *Violence Against Women*. The report summarizes data compiled from more than 400,000 interviews on violence suffered by women during the years 1987 through 1991. The report provides demographic profiles of victims, perceived demographics of offenders and examination of specific offense types.

The NCVS found that from 1973 to 1991 the rate of male and female victimization declined but that the women's rate declined more slowly than men's. The report also says that, based on survey results, women are just as likely to be victims of violent offenses committed by intimates, such as husbands or boyfriends, as they are to be victimized by acquaintances or strangers.

For copies of the above three reports, contact the Bureau of Justice Statistics Clearinghouse, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850.

IRC develops county profiles

The Authority's Information Resource Center (IRC) has developed county-level criminal justice system profiles for each of Illinois' 102 counties. Designed as reference tools to be updated annually, the profiles should assist county government officials in examining present criminal justice systems and projecting future needs and concerns.

The 30-page profiles provide an overview of the criminal justice system, including law enforcement, criminal courts, county jail and probation, state correctional admissions and drug abuse treatment data. Each report examines these topics' trends in narrative and visual formats. The Authority has compiled multi-year data for each section with the assistance of other state agencies, including the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Illinois Department of Corrections, Illinois Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse and the Illinois State Police.

County officials can contact the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Information Resource Center, 120 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago, IL 60606-3997, for copies.

CHRI: Setting the record straight

Criminal history record information (CHRI) plays a crucial role at every stage of the criminal justice process. Because CHRI is important in so many areas, ensuring its quality has become even more critical in recent years. In 1991, Illinois convened an 18-member Ad Hoc Committee on Dispositional Reporting to serve as a task force on criminal justice records improvement.

By Mark Myrent

Throughout Illinois, criminal history record information is used at almost every stage of the criminal justice process to help make decisions affecting individual freedom of defendants and public safety. These records, called CHRI, must be accurate, timely and complete.

For example, knowledge of previous arrests and convictions is vital so that correct charges can be filed, bail decisions can be made, appropriate sentences can be given and appropriate jail and prison classifications can be determined. Further, in January 1991, the Illinois Uniform

Conviction Information Act (IUCIA) made conviction information from criminal history records available to the public. With increased disclosure and use of CHRI resulting from this law, the need for these records to be accurate, timely and complete became paramount.

Since 1983, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has audited the computerized criminal history (CCH) system maintained by the Illinois State Police (ISP). The 1990 audit team found that nearly two-thirds of the arrests it looked at were missing final court disposi-

tions and concluded that missing disposition information remained one of the most serious problems affecting CHRI quality and usefulness. The audit also concluded there was an urgent need for a comprehensive effort to address the disposition problem and recommended forming an ad hoc committee of representatives from the Authority, ISP, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) and local CHRI reporting agencies to develop effective solutions.

At the same time CHRI data quality was being scrutinized in Illinois, it was increasingly becoming a national concern, since it was anticipated this information would be used to limit the ability of convicted criminals to buy handguns. The federal Crime Control Act of 1990 required each state that received Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance formula grant funds to allocate at least 5 percent of its total award for improvement of criminal justice records. In December 1991, the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) developed criteria by which states could, if they met certain criteria, waive the 5 percent set-aside requirements.

The criteria, which apply to arrests made since October 1991, attempt to ensure that:

- ◆ 95 percent of felony arrest records fully and accurately reflect the underlying criminal justice transaction;
- ◆ 95 percent of felony arrest records contain disposition information, if a disposition has been reached; and,
- ◆ 95 percent of current sentences to and releases from prison are available (on criminal records).

Other BJA criteria, pertaining to criminal records systems automation, flagging of felony records and reporting records to the FBI had already been met in Illinois when they were announced at the federal level.

BJA guidelines provided direction for CHRI improvements, with step one the establishment of a criminal justice records improvement task force, which was required to implement a plan that would meet the criteria. In Illinois, the 18-member Ad Hoc

Committee on Dispositional Reporting convened in 1991 to serve as that task force. It was charged with identifying and solving problems that affect Illinois criminal history records and contains representatives from the arenas of law enforcement, prosecution, courts, corrections and other CHRI reporters and users. Its work is carried out by staff, who are designated by committee members.

One of the committee's first tasks was to draft a set of principles (see sidebar) to guide Illinois' CHRI system. The principles underscore the importance of criminal history records and the urgency associated with improving CHRI to fully meet the needs of all users.

After the principles were established, staff analyzed the problems associated with reporting criminal records to the CCH system and accessing complete criminal history transcripts (rap sheets) from the system. To perform the analysis, surveys were sent to each of the police and sheriff's departments, state's attorneys' offices, circuit court clerks' offices and county jails in Illinois and to a sample of criminal court judges. Information from the surveys was supplemented through discussions at Ad Hoc Committee meetings.

From these, several strategies were devised. The analysis and recommendations are contained in the *Illinois Criminal History Records Improvement Plan*, submitted to BJA in June 1992.

Training

One of the first problems identified was the need to improve training and technical assistance, since no formal, consistent process existed for ISP to identify problems with CHRI reporting and access. While ISP field staff did identify some problems, the ISP had no formal method of putting them in a prioritized list for resolution.

In addition, CHRI reporting agencies did not have a comprehensive user manual. The need for a manual was magnified by frequent turnover at local criminal justice agencies. Similarly, regular training was not available to agency personnel. Although the ISP had some success in

bringing together countywide criminal justice agency staff members to assess data reporting and intracounty data transfer issues, lack of resources restricted activities to just a few pilot sites.

As a response, two separate projects were funded. County-Wide Meetings for Criminal Justice Agencies, are being held across the state. At these meetings, criminal justice officials identify and resolve problems connected with reporting arrests and dispositions to CCH. While participants in each county may vary, attendance usually includes the chief judge and representatives from the state's attorney's office, circuit court clerk's office, probation department, sheriff's department and all police departments and correctional facilities in the counties.

The second project that addresses training is the Comprehensive CHRI Reference Manual for Criminal History Users. When distributed near the end of 1994, it will contain standard, formal policies and procedures for criminal justice data collection, data definition and

information transfer. Included will be customized sections for each county that describe precise procedures for how CHRI reporting forms (also called arrest fingerprint forms) will be transferred. It will be available both in print and on computer disk.

Technology

The Ad Hoc Committee also discovered that the technology used by criminal justice agencies to report CHRI to the ISP and to access rap sheets needed to be upgraded. Two federally funded projects, Livescan Expansion and On-Line Court Disposition Reporting, were established in response.

Direct electronic fingerprinting, or livescan, "reads" a person's fingerprints directly into a computer, bypassing the old ink-and-paper method. The fingerprints can then be transferred electronically to the ISP or to other agencies, stored on magnetic tape or disks and printed out over and over. With this method, there is absolutely no loss of clarity, and arrest booking information entered on a personal computer

see CHRI, next page

Guide to Illinois' CHRI system principles

Preamble

A criminal history record system is absolutely necessary for a fair and efficient criminal justice system. It is the mutual responsibility of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of State and local government that a timely, accurate, complete and current criminal history record system be established and maintained.

It is further the mutual responsibility of these governmental entities that the criminal history record system be utilized to the maximum extent throughout the criminal justice system.

Principles

- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information must be accurate, complete and current.
- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information must be available in a timely and efficient manner.
- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information program must make optimum use of information and communications technology.
- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information must be guided by and responsive to the needs and requirements of its users.
- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information must be readily available for research and other management and systemic analysis purposes.
- ◆ Illinois' criminal history record information program must foster and support information sharing and exchange among agencies within the criminal justice system.

CHRI, from page 5

at police and sheriff's departments can be linked with the digital fingerprint image. The electronic transmission of these livescan records — containing arrestee data and digital fingerprints — replaces the form used by most agencies to report arrests to CCH.

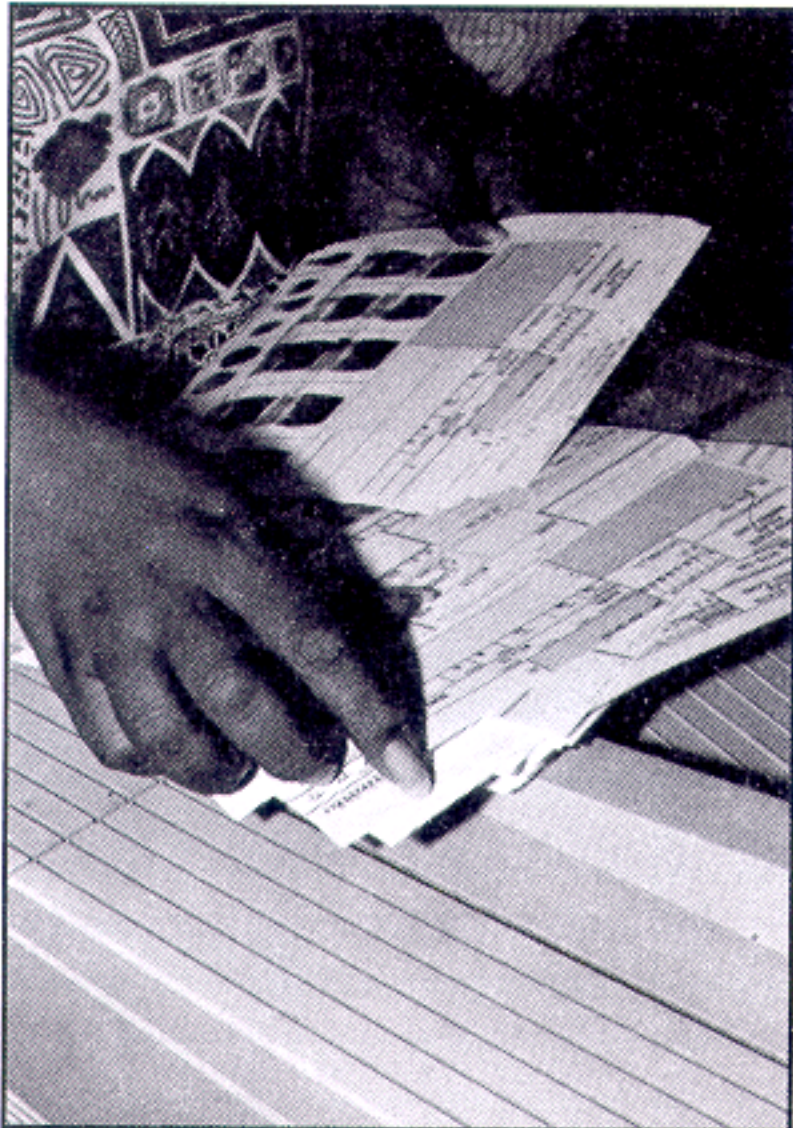
Using the livescan process will help solve several CHRI problems identified by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Annual volumes of submissions processed by the ISP, including arrests, dispositions and criminal history searches, have risen dramatically in recent years. This means that at times there have been considerable backlogs of arrest fingerprint cards waiting to be processed. These backlogs in turn often result in months-long delays before reported arrests and dispositions can be posted to the CCH database.

Electronic livescan transmissions will help minimize these backlogs by eliminating data entry tasks associated with manually-prepared forms. This benefit will be further enhanced with the recent establishment of standards for electronic fingerprint

images by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). No interface yet exists between livescan technology and automated fingerprint identification systems (AFIS), which provide automated storage and classification of fingerprint files at the

ISP. Currently, livescan fingerprints must be printed out and then scanned by an AFIS card reader.



Through AFIS, Illinois fingerprint submissions on 10-print cards are compared against the computerized database of more than 2.1 million cards.

This digital-to-analog-to-digital conversion delays fingerprint processing. Issuance of the ANSI standards, however, will propel livescan and AFIS vendors toward open systems standards, therefore permitting an electronic link between the two technologies. When this happens, the processing of livescan fingerprints will be fully automated and will further reduce processing time for arrests and other fingerprint-based submissions to CCH.

The livescan process already provides improved fingerprint image quality, serving to upgrade the ISP's AFIS database. As an arrestee is fingerprinted with livescan, the image is displayed on a video monitor, and an operator can immediately tell if the

quality is acceptable. If it is not, the technician can start over. In addition, since the image is transmitted digitally, there is no loss of clarity when it is received by ISP. This is particularly beneficial for criminal history background searches, which are now usually initiated by telefax equipment. Telefaxing, however, causes fingerprint image quality to erode, which may in turn prevent the ISP from being able to classify the prints.

Federally-funded livescan projects in Winnebago County, Peoria County and the Sixth Court District of Cook County have been structured to produce one more important benefit.

Another problem found by the Ad Hoc Committee was dispositions reported to CCH without document control numbers. The DCNs serve as tracking

numbers to associate arrests with corresponding court dispositions. For a variety of reasons, these number sometimes are not received by the circuit court clerk's office.

Each livescan project, however, is located at a centralized booking facility that will eventually transmit electronic arrest booking records to the circuit court clerk's office. The DCN is automatically generated and transferred as part of the livescan transaction.

Therefore, all subsequent court dispositions reported to CCH by the court clerk will contain the DCN and maximize the number of dispositions that can be posted to CCH.

Similar to the livescan initiative, On-Line Court Disposition Reporting also aims to reduce the backlog of CHRI submissions at ISP by eliminating manual data entry. Much of the groundwork for this project was completed by the Automated Disposition Reporting (ADR) Users Group, comprised of data processing managers from circuit court clerks' offices across the state. This group developed the procedures and software required for court clerks' offices to report court events electronically via magnetic tape to ISP and to the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

The federally funded on-line disposition reporting project will take this initiative one step further. The two-way communication channel used for reporting dispositions to CCH also will be used to improve and expedite error identification by ISP, error notification to the clerk's office and the subsequent reporting of corrections back to ISP. The first on-line disposition reporting project is now being developed in DuPage County.



Technicians at the BOI in Joliet map coordinates from fingerprint cards.

Kristi Turnbaugh

Kristi Turnbaugh

Auditing

The other CHRI improvement project created with federal funds is the Comprehensive CHRI Data Quality Audit. Federal guidelines for Illinois' CHRI Improvement Plan require a comprehensive data quality audit or assessment to help make informed decisions regarding project development and evaluation.

The audit is expected to provide periodic measurement of Illinois' progress toward compliance with BJA waiver criteria regarding timeliness, completeness and accuracy of CHRI. In addition, the audit plan includes a detailed descriptive overview of current CCH system records and an assessment of recent changes to that system. (A more detailed description of this plan can be found in the article on CHRI Auditing, found on page 8 of this issue of *The Compiler*.)

Other CHRI Improvements

Several CHRI improvement strategies developed through the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and its various work groups will not require the use of federal funds:

- ◆ The ISP has hired data entry staff to help eliminate the backlog of arrest fingerprint cards waiting entry onto CCH. They have successfully reduced the backlog from 208,016 in October 1992 to 55,893 in May 1994. In addition, ISP's Disposition Acquisition Unit was formed in 1990 to seek out dispositions related to requested conviction information. Since then, the Unit acquired more than 400,000 dispositions — mostly state's attorney filing decisions — which were subsequently posted to CCH.

- ◆ As cited earlier, the absence of document control numbers (DCNs) prevents court dispositions from being posted to the CCH database. Two corrective measures have been initiated through the Ad Hoc Committee in those jurisdictions with the largest number of arrests and dispositions. First, the circuit court clerks' offices in Cook and DuPage counties began sending notification letters to arresting agencies and prosecutors that file court cases without DCNs. The letters requested

that these agencies supply missing DCNs for specific cases. They also stressed the general importance of transmitting these numbers so that court dispositions will ultimately appear on the rap sheets, on which agencies regularly depend.

Also, collaboration between the Cook County state's attorney's and circuit court clerk's offices will help get court dispositions posted on CCH that were previously reported to CCH without DCNs. An analysis by the Ad Hoc Committee's Cook County CHRI Work Group revealed that most of the DCNs missing from the circuit court clerk's database are contained in the

state's attorney's case tracking system. The state's attorney's office, therefore, is now beginning to transmit case records to the clerk's office through a tape exchange. Once these DCNs are recovered, the clerk's office will then report the corresponding court dispositions to CCH, allowing thousands of dispositions, previously sitting in a pending file at ISP, to be posted.

- ◆ Many court dispositions cannot be posted to CCH because they contain statutory offense citations that do not meet ISP requirements. The complexities **see CHRI, page 18**

Guidelines for Obtaining Livescan Technology

Livescan fingerprint devices offer agencies that use them several benefits. With the technology, subjects are fingerprinted once; technicians perform data entry once; and, fingerprint cards are printed on an as-needed basis. This capability can significantly increase efficiency and accuracy in taking fingerprints and keeping records.

For Illinois agencies interested in acquiring livescan devices, it is essential to consider several factors before committing scarce local dollars toward their purchase. (Costs are not discussed here, as prices for livescan equipment vary.)

Some agencies received federal funds to set up pilot livescan programs and therefore had standardized criteria to follow when making their selections. Other groups must make sure any equipment they buy conforms to requirements of both the Illinois State Police (ISP) and the FBI for electronic submission of livescan images.

Specifically, the livescan device must be able to accept all data necessary for completion of state and federal fingerprint cards. After data is entered they should be edited to comply with ISP and FBI standards. Also, local agencies should be able to print out fingerprint cards on-site, without having to submit noncriterion charges (Class C misdemeanors and local ordinance violations) to the ISP's Bureau

of Identification (BOI) in Joliet. The livescan device needs to generate document control numbers (DCNs) and process control numbers (PCNs) and be able to include them in transmissions to the ISP, state's attorneys and courts. A block of these numbers can be provided by the ISP. Vendor criteria should include the ability to provide notification to state's attorneys and courts for criterion charges (felony and Class A and B misdemeanors) and to provide them with forms, if necessary, to use in reporting disposition information to the ISP.

Before purchasing a livescan system, agencies are encouraged to check with the BOI to make sure it has the equipment necessary to receive their electronic submissions. Currently, the BOI is receiving fingerprints from livescan devices sold by Digital Biometrics, Inc., 5600 Rowland Road, Minnetonka, MN 55343, (612) 932-0888, fax (612) 932-7181, and Identix Incorporated. (In Illinois, contact CORTECH, 125 Windsor Dr., Suite 124, Oak Brook, IL 60521, (708) 571-0770, fax (708) 571-0720, for information on Identix products.)

Local agencies also can contact Assistant Bureau Chief John Loverude at the Bureau of Identification, 260 North Chicago St., Joliet, IL 60431-1040, (815) 740-5176, for more information.

Assessing the quality of data

Accurate and complete criminal history record information is of paramount importance to the effective administration of criminal justice. Ensuring the quality of state criminal history records is a goal strongly echoed at the federal level. States are now required to set aside at least 5 percent of federal anti-drug abuse block grant funds for improving criminal history records.

By Mark Myrent

assisted by John Loverude and Len Wojciechowicz

Federal regulations governing the collection, maintenance and dissemination of criminal history record information (CHRI) have been in place since 1976. These regulations require that audits of the state central repository be conducted to help ensure the quality, privacy and security of criminal history records.

Under the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has a mandate to audit the quality of data maintained by the central repositories for CHRI. This enabling legislation states the Authority will “act as the sole, official, criminal justice body in the state of Illinois to conduct annual and periodic audits of the procedures, policies and practices of the state central repositories for CHRI.”

The Illinois computerized criminal history record system, maintained by the Illinois State Police (ISP), is the most audited criminal history record program in the nation. Since the early 1980s, the state computerized criminal history (CCH) system has been audited eight times. Seven were conducted by the Authority and its

predecessor agency, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Council; the first was conducted by the Office of the Illinois Auditor General. Because of reduced funding, the Authority is no longer conducting the state-level audit.

Auditing Procedures

The basic purpose of a CHRI data quality audit is to determine the extent to which criminal justice transactions required to be reported to the central criminal record repository are fully and accurately reported in a timely manner and are accurately entered into the repository database. These transactions include arrests, state’s attorneys’ filing decisions, final court dispositions, and correctional admissions and status changes. Some elements of data quality can be evaluated at the repository without reference to official records maintained at reporting agencies. For example, timeliness of reporting can be assessed by comparing dates when reported transactions occurred with dates when reported information was received at the repository (if reception dates are logged) or dates

when information was posted to the CCH database (if these dates are logged). In addition, analysis of the repository database identifies instances where transactions apparently occurred but were not reported, such as arrest entries for which no dispositions were received within a designated period, or entries showing a court conviction and prison sentence without a reported correctional admission within an appropriate period. The Authority used these analyses extensively in many of its CCH audits.

The Authority’s Audits

ISP’s Bureau of Identification (BOI), Illinois’ central CHRI repository, has almost always been at the center of Authority audits. However, from year to year, Authority audits focused on different elements of CHRI. For example, the 1988 audit was the first to look at CHRI after a major CCH system redesign the prior year. It found ISP’s procedures on dissemination and ensuring individuals’ rights to access and review their records complied with state and federal requirements. The audit also found that ISP had established adequate procedures at its Joliet facility to ensure the confidentiality and security of CHRI.

In examining the quality of CHRI data, however, the 1988 audit found, as have most audits before and since, that missing dispositional information was the most serious and persistent problem plaguing the CCH system, and it compromised the usefulness and integrity of state rap sheets. The audit found that a large number of arrest transactions on records created under the redesigned CCH system were missing both state’s attorneys’ filing decisions and final court dispositions.

Similarly, the 1990 CCH audit found that while the overall percentage of arrests lacking dispositions decreased since the 1988 audit, the majority were still missing both the state’s attorneys’ and court dispositions. Moreover, the 1990 audit found that for Cook and DuPage counties, Illinois’ two largest reporting jurisdictions, the percentage of missing dispositions was even higher. While both counties were reporting dispositions by automated tape,

the audit pointed to technical problems with that process.

The Authority's 1992 audit examined the CCH system using information from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) as a starting point. This evaluation targeted rap sheets of IDOC inmates, since that population included offenders convicted of the most serious crimes — many of whom had extensive prior criminal histories and were likely to recidivate upon release. The audit found that nearly half of the total arrests that appeared on inmates' rap sheets lacked final court dispositions — an average of more than three per inmate. The audit also found it was very difficult for rap sheet users to obtain a complete picture of all events related to an inmate's most recent incarceration because of missing disposition information. Only one

useful audit method is agency site visits, where records are examined and the adequacy of reporting procedures is determined.

This audit method is highly accurate for two reasons. First, auditors may establish that particular reportable transactions actually occurred. Second, by comparing the official agency records with repository records, the auditor can determine whether the transactions were reported fully, accurately and in a timely manner. This type of auditing can be expensive and time-consuming, since large numbers of records have to be reviewed to yield statistically significant results. In large states, this could mean thousands of records. In addition, some agencies do not consistently maintain official source documents. Some, in fact, do not even maintain event (e.g., arrest) logs.

single most pervasive deficiency. More than 60 percent of the audited agencies failed to report their CHRI documents in the time frame required by law. Filed charge, disposition and custodial information must be submitted within 30 days of the event. However, statutes require that arrests be submitted daily. Other significant audit findings include inaccurate reporting, improper dissemination of CHRI and under-reporting of juvenile arrests. All these problems can be found statewide and contribute to incomplete and inaccurate rap sheets.

Federal Auditing Program

The other local agency auditing initiative is associated with the federal program for CHRI improvement (see the lead article in this issue). To show compliance with federal regulations, states are now required to have a plan to ensure the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of CHRI. This plan must guarantee that the state conduct annual audits of a representative random sample of state and local criminal justice agencies to document adherence to federal regulations. The Crime Control Act of 1990 requires that each state receiving federal Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance formula grant funds (including Illinois) allocate at least 5 percent of the total award for improvement of criminal justice records, unless certain requirements are met. The Authority created the Criminal History Records Audit Center in August 1993 with a portion of these funds.

Although the current 1993–94 audit is designed to measure compliance with federal standards, it also will examine other facets of CHRI. A system overview will examine the current CCH system and the changes that have occurred over the past 10 years. A report, scheduled to be published in September 1994, will include an examination of the following:

- ◆ Record growth over time;
- ◆ Record dissemination and inquiry types;
- ◆ Submissions received, by type;
- ◆ Backlog of arrests and dispositions;

see Audit, next page

The audit found that nearly half of the total arrests that appeared on inmates' rap sheets lacked final court dispositions — an average of more than three per inmate.

in seven IDOC inmates had rap sheets containing information about their most recent incarceration and each of the case events leading up to it — that is, the complete criminal history from arrest through incarceration.

Local Agency Audits

These audits, which examine records received at the repository, have certain built-in limitations. It is not possible, for example, to determine whether all reportable transactions have been reported completely and accurately. Determinations require references to official source documents maintained by reporting agencies, such as arrest reports, prosecutor files, court dockets and other case files. One

In Illinois, two local agency auditing programs are in place. The ISP has been conducting audits since January 1991. Although the numbers of records reviewed do not produce statistically significant results, they provide a general assessment of data quality levels for planning purposes. These audits seek to determine whether agencies are following proper procedures for reporting, use and dissemination of CHRI. From the inception of the program through the first half of 1994, the ISP audited 68 police departments, 39 sheriff's departments, 76 state's attorneys' offices, 74 circuit court clerks' offices and 11 non-criminal justice agencies.

From the 268 completed audits, the ISP has determined that timeliness is the

One method of auditing is to conduct agency site visits to examine records and assess the adequacy of reporting procedures.

Audit, from page 9

- ◆ Staff and resources devoted to the records entry process; and, a comparison of Illinois information to other comparable states.

The audit's second phase examines CHRI timeliness. Auditors visited the ISP/BOI during three-day periods in February, May and August 1994. They logged each incoming arrest, charge, court disposition

with source documents from a sample of local reporting agencies and compare them with entries on the CCH system. Staff have already gathered most of the records from 49 police agencies, five state's attorneys, five clerks of the circuit court, five jails and the IDOC. Each agency was asked to provide arrests for each April from 1989 to 1993. Using the arrest records,

release in May 1995, coinciding with the release of the final report. The impact on public safety from incomplete rap sheets for that group of offenders will be greatest then, since that is the date they will be "hitting the streets."

Audit Uses

Findings and recommendations produced by audit activities have been used extensively throughout the years by the ISP, the Authority, reporting agencies and CHRI users. They have helped identify, quantify and set priorities for CHRI improvements, ranging from minor procedural changes and educating staff on individuals' rights of access and review to the complete redesign of CCH, an improvement implemented in 1987. In some cases, audits themselves simply identified that a problem existed. Further analysis was necessary to develop and implement the most appropriate solution. These audits also served as an impetus to create other committees, such as the Ad Hoc Committee on Dispositional Reporting, to conduct more in-depth studies of relevant problems.

Many changes in the CHRI program, in terms of new services, have been driven by external forces, such as legislation and changes at the federal level. However, virtually all improvements in how CHRI is reported, processed and made available have been driven by audit activity. ■

— *Mark Myrent is a senior research analyst at the Authority. Len Wojciechowicz is director of the Criminal History Records Audit Center. John Loverude is assistant bureau chief at the Bureau of Identification.*

The Illinois computerized criminal history record system, maintained by the Illinois State Police (ISP), is the most audited criminal history record program in the nation.

or custodial event received at the ISP. The visits were staggered so as to gather information at various times of the month. The gathered data provided a snapshot of the timeliness of local agency submissions.

About three months following each visit, auditors return to track the same records so they can determine if and when they have been posted to the CCH database. This will help identify the timeliness of ISP's data entry as well as possible factors that contributed to records not being posted. Currently, two visits have been completed; a third is scheduled in November.

The audit will look at CHRI accuracy and completeness in several different ways. First, in the "reverse audit," staff will begin

staff determine whether a corresponding CCH record exists. If it does, then the agency's records or copies of those sent to the ISP are compared to the CCH record to determine record accuracy and completeness.

Second, auditors will analyze a cycle of cases. Starting with a sample of 49 police agencies, they will track arrests for each April from 1989 to 1993. Auditors will examine the formal criminal justice system contacts offenders have that are required to be reported and entered into the CCH system and then determine whether the reporting and posting occurred.

Finally, the audit will update the Authority's 1992 CHRI analysis of IDOC inmates' rap sheets. It will examine rap sheets of every inmate scheduled for

Federal input on improving criminal records

Five years ago, the Attorney General recommended a program to Congress that would enhance efforts to stop firearms sales to convicted felons. Chief among the recommendations was using a portion of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 discretionary funds to help states improve their criminal history records.

By Paul White

For more than 25 years, the federal government has recognized the need for reliable, complete and accurate criminal history records. It began in 1968 when the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funded Project SEARCH — System for the Electronic Analysis and Retrieval of Criminal Histories. Following successful completion of a demonstration project, designed to test the feasibility of states electronically exchanging criminal histories, LEAA's National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service established a major funding program to develop and implement computerized criminal history systems at the state level. Between 1972 and 1980, the LEAA spent more than \$40 million on the program.

During this period, users of criminal history information were almost exclusively criminal justice agencies, but that began to change in the 1980s, when it became clear others had a legitimate need for access to criminal history record information. The needs of non-criminal justice users for licensing background checks, employment screening and security clearances pointed out the importance of accurate and complete records.

Section 6213 of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 required the Attorney General

to report to Congress by November 1989 on a system to immediately and accurately identify felons attempting to purchase firearms. The Task Force on Felon Identification and Firearms Sales was established to develop a range of options for complying with the statute; in October 1989, it sent its final report to the Attorney General with several options but no specific recommendations.

One month later, the Attorney General recommended a four-part program to Congress that would enhance efforts to stop firearms sales to convicted felons. Chief among the recommendations was using \$27 million in Anti-Drug Abuse Act discretionary funds over fiscal years 1990, 1991 and 1992 so states could improve their criminal history records. This would

The BJS-administered program provided \$27,625,031 to all 50 states, the District of Columbia and two territories. Among the most-funded activities were reporting improvement (77 percent of states); equipment purchases (57 percent); and, meeting BJS/FBI standards (51 percent). It should be noted that these numbers probably underrepresent the number of states engaged in these activities, as some may be using their own funds.

be accomplished in part by helping them achieve compliance with voluntary BJS/FBI standards for improving completeness and quality of criminal history information. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) was chosen by the Attorney General to manage the program, and on May 23, 1990, the Criminal History Record Improvement program was announced in the Federal Register.

The funds were directed at the states' criminal history records repositories, typically housed within a state police organization or a bureau of criminal identification. The funds could be used for any or all of the following nine program activities:

- ◆ Developing systems and procedures that identify convicted felons on their automated or manual criminal history records and including felony "flags" on those records;
- ◆ Developing programs and procedures that meet the BJS/FBI voluntary standards for identifying convicted felons;
- ◆ Developing systems and procedures to improve reporting of criminal justice information to the repositories, including arrests and dispositions;
- ◆ Ensuring a higher degree of criminal history automation by implementing a state master name index (MNI) or enhancing existing MNIs by increasing the number of individuals contained in the index;
- ◆ Ensuring a higher degree of criminal history automation by establishing a computerized criminal history (CCH) record system, increasing the number of

see Improve, next page

Improve, from page 11

individuals recorded in existing systems and improving the quality and timeliness of criminal history records;

- ◆ Developing procedures to participate in the FBI's Interstate Identification Index (III) or other "pointer" systems;
- ◆ Conducting a baseline audit of criminal history record systems to assess existing data quality levels and to measure the success of the data quality improvement program;

the nation's criminal history records, BJS funded surveys, conducted by SEARCH Group, Inc., of the state systems in 1989 and again in 1992. The reports from these projects, Survey of Criminal History Information Systems and Survey of Criminal History Information Systems, 1992, do indicate improvements, but the final picture will not be clear for some time since many states have not yet completed their funded projects.

So states could improve the data quality

describing the state's goals and objectives for spending the funds;

- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive data quality audit or assessment of the state's criminal history information and describe how it intends to resolve shortcomings in the system;
- ◆ Identify reasons for incomplete or inaccurate records; and,
- ◆ Develop a records improvement plan and submit it to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) for review and approval.

As of February 1994, 34 states had an approved plan for FY1992, another five had received a pre-plan exception to use all or part of their 1992 funds, and five plans were in various stages of review. Approximately 82 percent of the FY1992 money has been released by the BJA. ■

— Paul White of the Bureau of Justice Statistics thanks writers Bernard Shipley and Linda Ruder for the BJS publication Attorney General's Program for Improving the Nation's Criminal History Records: Bureau of Justice Statistics Status Report, February 1992, on which he relied to write this article.

In November 1990, Congress amended the Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to require the set-aside of at least 5 percent of a state's Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance formula grant funds to improve criminal justice records, beginning with federal fiscal year 1992.

- ◆ Upgrading existing data systems to meet improved data quality requirements by obtaining auxiliary equipment such as disks, printers and communication lines; and,
- ◆ Coordinating activities under this program with agencies using the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance formula grant funds to implement new provisions related to criminal records and reporting to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

The BJS-administered program provided \$27,625,031 to all 50 states, the District of Columbia and two territories. Among the most-funded activities were: reporting improvement (77 percent of states); equipment purchases (57 percent); and, meeting BJS/FBI standards (51 percent). It should be noted that these numbers probably under-represent the number of states engaged in these activities, as some may be using their own funds.

To get a sense of the changes in reporting, completeness and accuracy of

ty of criminal records, a series of seminars on auditing were conducted by SEARCH in Sacramento, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis. The seminars focused on describing a criminal history record, the components of criminal record systems, the management of record information and how to conduct baseline audits of a state's centralized criminal record database. Information provided to attendees is in the BJS publication *Assessing Completeness and Accuracy of Criminal History Records Systems: Audit Guide*.

In November 1990, Congress amended the Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to require the set-aside of at least 5 percent of a state's Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance formula grant funds to improve criminal justice records, beginning with federal fiscal year 1992. To qualify for the funds, a state must follow four steps:

- ◆ Establish a criminal justice records improvement task force to develop a plan

Thanks

The Compiler staff would like to thank the many people who helped with this issue, including Ted Elzerman and Marcel Reid, assistant bureau chiefs of the Bureau of Identification in Joliet, who provided us with invaluable information about the BOI. Also, thanks to Lt. John Burzysnski, Sgt. Therese Hoffman and the Instant Update Unit at the Chicago Police Department for the photo tour of the unit's operations.

We thank Kip Beach at United Charities for setting up an interview for the *Vehicle For Change* article. And we thank Jim Reed of the Illinois State Police for background information on the *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* and Bob Smith and the CPD crime lab for the cover photo. The help and information we received for this issue proved invaluable.

Developing new information paths

Virgil Young, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Knoxville, Tennessee, Field Division, explains efforts to expand current information systems capabilities.

By Virgil Young

The FBI is engaged in many major efforts to provide the criminal justice community in the United States with the most modern, up-to-date information systems available anywhere in the world. These efforts will significantly expand current capabilities.

One of the most important upgrades is to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), an indispensable tool to U.S. law enforcement since its inception in the late 1960s. The NCIC 2000 project will expand the amount of textual data available to law enforcement agencies nationwide. It will add the U.S. Bureau of Prisons prisoner file, a toxic chemicals file and a direct link to the Canadian Police Information Centre. NCIC 2000 also will improve the system's internal editing functions and make a whole new class of information available through its image transmission capabilities. For example, police officers will be able to scan single fingerprints from their patrol cars, then transmit the data for checking against a fingerprint database of known fugitives. A positive identification could be transmitted back to the patrol car within minutes. It would also allow transmission of other images to patrol cars, including mug shots, tattoos and pictures of stolen goods.

A \$47-million contract to build the system was awarded in March 1993, and it is expected to begin national operations in 1995. NCIC "control terminal agencies" in each state are committed to providing full NCIC 2000 capabilities to NCIC users in their states within three years of the FBI's achieving full operational capability at the

national level. The Illinois State Police is the control terminal agency in Illinois.

Another FBI operation undergoing major revision is fingerprint processing. For more than 60 years, the FBI has been collecting arrest fingerprints and other data voluntarily submitted from arresting agencies nationwide and then disseminating the resulting criminal history records to authorized agencies. Coinciding with the relocation of its fingerprint operation from Washington, D.C., to a new facility in West Virginia by June 1995, the FBI also is developing a paperless fingerprint process called the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS).

Currently, the FBI relies on paper arrest fingerprint cards it receives by mail. IAFIS will allow livescan fingerprint data to be transmitted from local police booking stations, through state identification bureaus, all the way to the FBI's new facility in West Virginia, where the information can be compared with a database of more than 30 million sets of 10-print images. IAFIS will add capabilities for automated storage and search of arrest fingerprints, as well as telecommunication facilities to exchange fingerprint images and related data with state identification bureaus. The FBI plans to handle urgent electronic requests within two hours, thus getting search results back to the booking station in time for information on a prisoner's prior criminal history record to be used at preliminary hearings, bail settings and other criminal justice decision points.

Other, less urgent, requests will be

processed by IAFIS within one day, providing dramatic improvement over the current manual processing time. IAFIS also will allow searches on latent (lifted from the crime scene) fingerprints to be conducted from remote terminals outside the FBI; the latent prints can be checked electronically against a portion of the entire 10-print database. The FBI will continue to accept paper fingerprint cards from agencies unable to transmit them electronically but plans to scan the paper cards immediately upon receipt in West Virginia and handle the processing electronically from that point on.

The FBI has divided IAFIS development into three segments. The Identification Tasking and Networking (ITN) segment will provide telecommunications facilities for receiving fingerprint searches and other requests, for processing the requests internally and for communicating the results of the search back to the requesting agency or person. The AFIS segment is scheduled to be operational by January 1998. The third segment is a major upgrade to the Interstate Identification Index (III), the state-FBI pointer system which handles updating and exchanging criminal history records. Mid-1998 is the target date for full operating capability for the entire IAFIS.

Finally, the FBI is switching from the summary Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The FBI has been collecting summary UCR data for more than 60 years from law enforcement agencies nationwide and then collating and publishing the data in various periodic reports. After a lengthy study in the 1980s, it was decided to change from a summary system to one based on data collected by law enforcement at the time each crime incident is reported. This will provide a much richer database for analysis, allowing criminal justice professionals, the news media and the public to better understand local, state and national crime problems and to plan responses. As of August 1994, eight states were using the NIBRS format; an additional 18 were testing the format.

As part of the NCIC 2000 project, the

see Info, page 18

Cook County explores data integration

The poor fit between the process and structure of criminal justice has often hindered efforts to promote criminal record system integration. While criminal justice is a single process beginning with an arrest and ending with release from custody or supervision, the system's administrative structure is very decentralized. This is proved by the lack of coordination between criminal justice agencies' information systems. The problem is greatly magnified in a jurisdiction like Cook County, where there are more than 120 arresting agencies and a far-flung court system.

Historically, criminal justice agencies in Cook County have collected and archived the information required to meet only their own operational and administrative needs. The data, which was mostly kept on paper, rarely were shared with other county agencies.

The computer age brought a more efficient method of storing and retrieving information, but as agencies decided to change from paper to electronic storage, each one planned a computer system to meet their own needs. Little consideration, if any, was given to the concept of an integrated countywide network. Early planners thought agencies would continue to collect information manually, then have data operators place it on the agencies' systems. The result? Certain fundamental offender data, such as demographics and arrest charges, were, and are, continuously rekeyed into separate agency databases.

Those agencies that provided access to their information did so through dedicated lines, which severely limited the number of terminals and locations where the data could be obtained. Also, criminal justice officials attempting to compile comprehensive, up-to-date offender profiles had to make multiple inquiries to separate databases, using separate dedicated terminals.

The Cook County Information Subcommittee, whose mission is to address information needs of criminal justice agencies, is now exploring the possibilities of an integrated system. A model for a proposed Cook County Integrated Justice Network

System is scheduled for completion this year. One specification for such a network is that it must be an enterprisewide, distributed system that appears to be one unified database, so an inquiry from any agency in Cook County will search multiple agency databases but will produce one combined offender record. Other specifications were developed in response to additional concerns of the Cook County criminal justice community. In general, the subcommittee found that timeliness, accuracy and reduction of redundant data entry were the common goals.

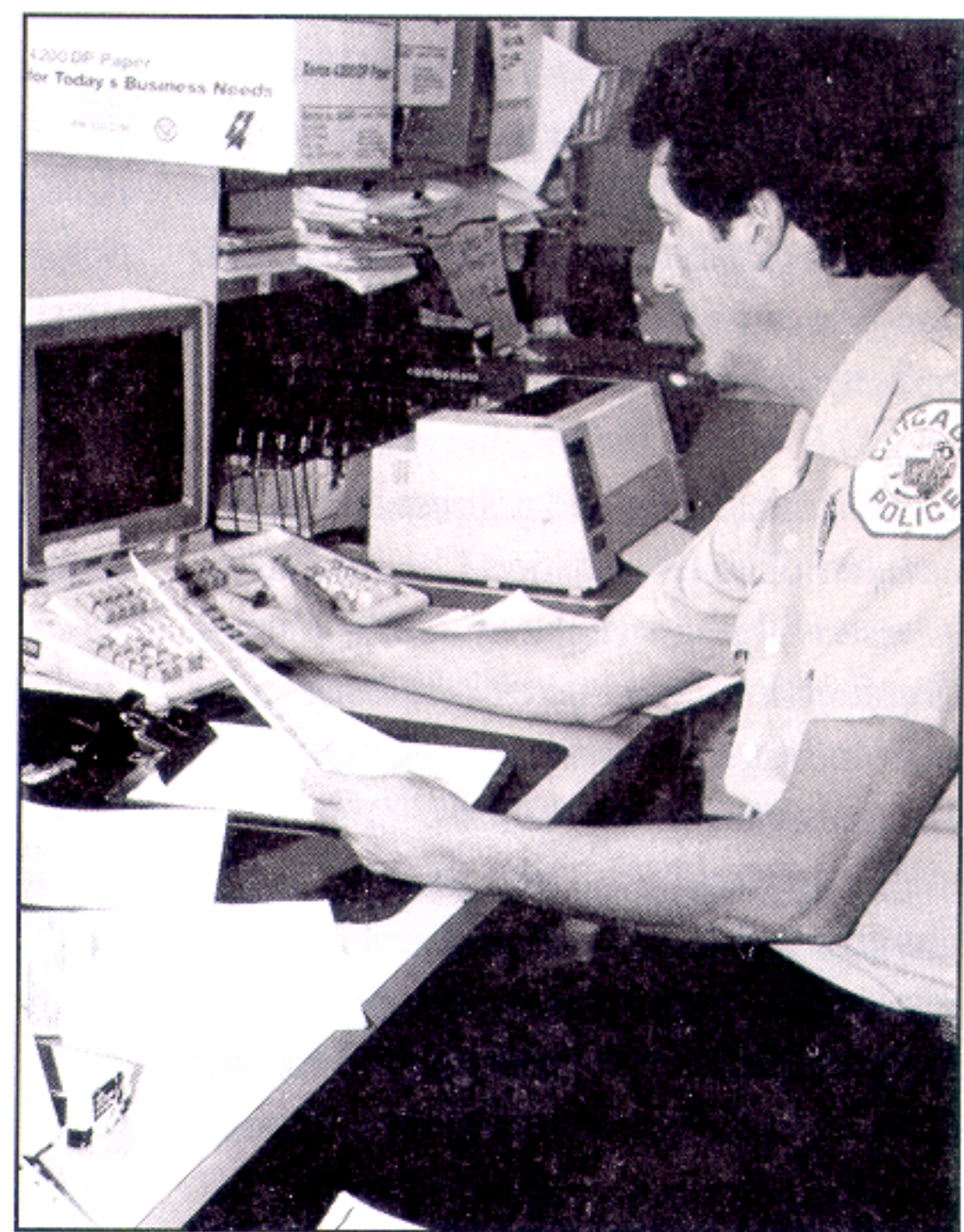
In addition to the subcommittee, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's Ad Hoc Committee on Dispositional Reporting created a Cook County CHRI Work Group. The group's mission parallels the subcommittee's in many areas; the scope of work and projects of each complement the other. The work group has been studying information collection procedures used by criminal justice agencies in Cook County and has compiled a report, *Cook County Offender Processing Project*. It was written after site visits to the probation department, state's attorney's office, public defender's office, social services office, pretrial services office, county corrections department, state department of corrections, clerk of circuit court, sheriff's police, Chicago Police Department and Illinois State Police Bureau of Identification. The report identified problems associated with information collection and reporting practices of criminal justice agencies and provided recommendations for the establishment of a countywide criminal justice data link.

County officials already have moved ahead with several system integration initiatives. The first is an on-line electronic transfer of court disposition data from the clerk of circuit court's system to the state's attorney's case tracking system. This will eliminate the need for staff from the prosecutor's office to

enter data manually. A number of test transfers of electronic disposition data have been completed, and this pilot will continue so its success can be evaluated. Later, these same on-line disposition data will be transmitted to other agencies.

Direct electronic transmission of the Chicago Police Department's arrest booking information to the clerk of the circuit court's system will begin in the near future. It also will be available to other agencies, thus eliminating redundant data entry, improving data accuracy and making that information available in a more timely manner.

A similar pilot program is planned for the Sixth Municipal District of the Cook County Circuit Court, with the Cook County Sheriff's Office agreeing to develop a centralized booking plan for the more than



Patrol Officer Robert Bartkowiak of the Chicago Police Department checks some of the 100 to 120 warrants that CPD processes daily.

Kristi Tumbaugh

40 police agencies using those facilities. By using livescan technology and other software, the booking information will be forwarded directly to the various criminal justice agencies.

The success of these and future

see Integration, page 18

Law allows public to obtain records

Ever since Janet H. was in high school, she wanted to work with children. In fact, when she finished graduate school, Janet planned to get a job as a childcare provider. After obtaining her master's degree, she applied for a position at a small daycare facility, and was one of two finalists. Both candidates possessed the skills necessary to effectively perform the job, and the potential employer placed both of them on an equal footing. However, after a criminal background check, Janet H. was rejected because the business owner found out about a five-year-old drug conviction.

Janet was 20 years old when she was convicted of the drug-related offense and never thought the record from that part of her life would follow her so many years after the crime. She never thought it could come back to haunt her.

But it could, and did.

Using the Illinois Uniform Conviction Information Act (UCIA/III.Rev.Stat. 1990, ch. 38, par. 1601 et seq.), employers, landlords, private citizens and licensing and investigation agencies are finding out whether individuals have criminal histories for serious offenses. The law makes the conviction records

of serious offenders in Illinois public information; it went into effect Jan. 1, 1991. Through it, the public can access conviction records maintained by the Illinois State Police (ISP).

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority proposed the UCIA in 1986 in response to the growing need of government agencies, businesses and private citizens to obtain accurate and complete criminal conviction information. Business people and private citizens sought an accessible tool they could use to extract information before making decisions that affected their lives, livelihoods and property.

The records made public by the law are officially known as criminal history record information (CHRI) transcripts; they are more commonly referred to as "rap sheets." They contain personal identification information (name, race, sex, date of birth and various physical characteristics), fingerprint classifications and a cumulative record of arrests, state's attorneys' charges, court dispositions and sentencing information.

With the UCIA, members of the public can pay a fee to access Illinois' conviction records for felonies and Class A and B misdemeanors, which are maintained by the ISP at its Bureau of Identification in Joliet. Janet H.'s records showed a Class 4 felony conviction for cocaine possession; her arrest came at a party where she and some friends were hanging out, doing "lines" of cocaine. The boi-

terousness of the crowd resulted in a call to police, and the partygoers ended up in court. Sentencing guidelines for Janet's conviction called for one to three years in prison; she received one year of probation — and a rap sheet.

What cannot be accessed with the UCIA is information about arrests, arrests with no subsequent convictions and non-convictions. These still are not considered public records. The UCIA also did not change current laws related to expunging criminal history information. The law does, however, contain safeguards to protect against misuse of the information.

The Illinois Uniform Conviction Information Act turns records of serious offenders into public information. Through it, citizens can request data from files maintained by the ISP.

How the law works

It is relatively simple to obtain information under the UCIA. Someone who needs the data completes a request form available from the BOI.

Requests used for employment or licensing decisions must be signed by both the employer and the person whose record is being searched.

The searches can be based on either a person's fingerprints or their name, but fingerprints are preferred because they provide more reliable identification. Since a surprising number of people have identical names and birth dates, there is no guarantee (without fingerprints or some other form of positive identification) that an offender named in a court proceeding and a job application are the same person.

There is a processing fee of \$10 for each name-based search and a fee of \$14 for fingerprint-based searches, which is paid to the state police.

For an additional fee of up to \$10, some local police or sheriff's departments assist with fingerprinting. Requests that don't use fingerprints must include the name, race, sex and birth date of the person being investigated.

After receiving a request, the ISP will search its Computerized Criminal History (CCH) system for records that contain information about convictions for any felonies and/or Class A and B misdemeanors committed in the state.

Illinois law says that requests from criminal justice agencies and other governmental bodies receive first priority from the ISP. Private employers, members of the news media and the general public must wait until high-priority searches are handled but should have their information within two weeks of the request.

Private employers, members of the news media and the general public must wait until high-priority searches are handled but should have their information within two weeks of the request.

see Law, next page

Someone filing a request for information could be told a person has no convictions when in fact the person has an arrest record, but the conviction never was posted on the system.

Law, from page 15

When completed, the state police sends two copies of a criminal history report to the person who requested it; one of them must be forwarded to the subject of the search. In fact, an employment decision cannot be made until the record is forwarded. The person whose record was searched then has seven days to inform the employer of any inaccurate information. After the seven days have elapsed, an employment decision based on the data can be made.

Janet H. could not tell the daycare facility owner there was anything wrong with her record; she *had* been convicted of cocaine possession. Based on the criminal history report, the employer decided to hire the other candidate, which was a lawful action. It is illegal to hold arrest or non-job-related conviction information against an applicant. The employer decided Janet's cocaine conviction made her an unsuitable candidate to work with children.

Requests increasing annually

Since the law was enacted three years ago, the ISP has received more than 90,000 requests for serious criminal conviction records. In 1991, there were 4,140 name-based requests and 499 fingerprint-based requests. In 1992, the requests increased to 29,880 for searches by name (a seven-fold increase over the previous year) and 1,182 for searches by fingerprint. The increase is attributable to heightened public awareness of the law, according to ISP authorities.

In 1993, the requests increased again — to 54,657 (name) and 1,785 (fingerprints) — and the trend is continuing in 1994. As of May 31, there had been 16,591 name-based requests and 1,139 fingerprint-based requests.

“As the data above indicate, there has been a significant increase in UCIA requests submitted each year,” said Judie Welch, chief of the Bureau of Identification. “We have had to continue to increase our staffing levels in order to process the UCIA inquiries in an expeditious manner.”

Inquiries are received from a wide range of employers and private individuals, according to Welch. The U.S. Postal Service, custodial care facilities and rental property agencies are among the more frequent users.

Since the ISP is the central repository and custodian of criminal history record information for Illinois, every policing body in the state must furnish it on a daily basis with charge information, fingerprints and descriptions of individuals arrested for felonies and Class A and B misdemeanors. Other criminal justice agencies have 30 days to turn in disposition information for which they are accountable. For example, state's attorneys must supply the ISP with charge information, while circuit court clerks supply court dispositions. The information is then posted to the CCH

system by BOI staffers.

Limitations

When a UCIA request comes in, the ISP searches all the conviction records it has on file. When it finds an arrest record, but no accompanying disposition information, the ISP checks with circuit court clerks to find out the outcome of the case.

There is a possibility that someone filing a UCIA request could be told erroneously that a person has not been convicted of any felonies or Class A or B misdemeanors, when in fact they have. In those cases, the conviction was not recorded onto the system. This can happen because of inaccuracies in disposition reporting and within the CCH system.

In a 1992 audit, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority estimated that nearly 50 percent of arrests reported to the state's CCH system lacked court dispositions showing whether the person was convicted. Efforts underway to improve disposition reporting throughout Illinois include developing methods to electronically transmit rap sheets.

Despite the limitations caused by problems with disposition reporting, the UCIA has helped employers and other citizens obtain needed criminal conviction information. Before the UCIA, criminal history records were closed to the general public, with exceptions made only for criminal justice agencies, state and local governmental bodies, the military, regulated professions and private childcare providers.

For more information, or to obtain a conviction information request form, contact the Illinois State Police, Bureau of Identification, 260 N. Chicago St., Joliet, IL 60431, (815) 740-5160. ■

— Jamilah Owens

Vehicle steers to decrease youth auto theft

Like most teenagers, Reginald W. likes to drive. In fact, he recently bought a car from a friend so he could drive whenever and wherever he wanted. One day, while driving with his cousin, Reginald ran a stop sign. The violation did not go unnoticed by a nearby police officer. She flashed her lights, and Reginald pulled over.

The officer discovered that Reginald was just 13 years old, so he did not have a driver's license. Furthermore, even though Reginald claimed he had bought the car from a friend, the registration named someone else as the owner. The boy was handcuffed and arrested for possession of a stolen motor vehicle.

Reginald could have ended up talking to a judge. But instead of facing charges in court, Reginald is seeking help through an innovative program called Vehicle for Change. The nine-month-long program, started in the fall of 1992, seeks to rehabilitate teens arrested for first-time possession of a stolen motor vehicle (PSMV). It is the only program of its kind in the nation and is funded by the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, which has provided more than \$600,000 since the program's inception. It is administered jointly by the Office of the Cook County State's Attorney and United Charities.

Vehicle for Change developed over the course of 1992, after Cook County officials took note of the very young auto thieves who were showing up in court. In fact, juveniles accounted for more than half of the 5,400 people prosecuted in Cook County for auto theft in 1991. According to Craig Perri, supervisor of the program's counseling services at United Charities, these teens are at a crucial point in their lives. Redirection is essential, he said in a 1993 interview, to divert them from committing still more crimes.

The program process starts in the Office of the Cook County State's Attorney. After a juvenile is charged with first-time PSMV, his or her rap sheet is reviewed to see if he or she is a VFC prospect. To be eligible, the offender must be 13 to 16 years old, live in one of five Southwest Side police districts (Gresham, Englewood, Chicago Lawn, Deering or Morgan Park) and be a first-time PSMV offender with no record of more serious charges. All eligible offenders are invited to participate in

Vehicle For Change, said Lana Johnson, program administrator for the state's attorney's office. "But some kids choose to go to court," she said. "Kids get probation, anyway, from the court, so it depends whether the families want the kids back on track."

Indeed, cooperation at home is required since the program works with the entire family. By assigning each family to a social worker/case manager team, the program seeks to discover what may have led the teen to commit crime. "If the parents care, the program

has a chance," said Program Monitor Diana Mann, of the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. "Otherwise, it would be a real uphill battle."

Each youth meets with a social worker at least once a week to discuss the arrest, problems at home and better problem-solving skills, said Perri, a clinical social worker. Case managers talk to school officials about the juvenile's academic progress and then develop tutoring and recreation programs to break any street gang ties.

About once a month, 20 teens meet informally with police officers to discuss conflict resolution and decision making. Case managers spend more informal, individual time talking with teens and organizing recreational activities, such as going to movies. A weekend camping trip to Algonquin Forest Preserve, where the youths complete challenge courses and games designed to develop trust, is another way program officials try to reach offenders.

Since the program's start in 1992 through Aug. 1, 1994, 237 youths have enrolled in Vehicle For Change, said Johnson. Approximately one-third more than that number were referred to VFC but did not enroll. Those youths either were ineligible (i.e., had a criminal record) or missed two screening appointments for enrollment consideration. Teens who drop out of the program, or are kicked out for being arrested again or not following program guidelines, are sent back to court to face their original charges.



More than 72 youths, including these four, have been graduated from Vehicle For Change since the program's inception in 1992.

Photo courtesy of Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council

Youths who stick it out for the entire nine months graduate and are rewarded by having the PSMV charges dropped. A graduation ceremony is held approximately twice a year to honor the teens who have completed VFC.

As of Aug. 1, 80 youths had dropped out since the program's start, and 72 juveniles had completed it, said Johnson. "About the

see Vehicle, page 19

CHRI, from page 7

associated with punctuating statutes from the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) and Illinois Revised Statutes (IRS) result in considerable variance in how these citations are recorded by criminal justice agencies across Illinois. As a solution to this problem, the ADR Users Group has developed a set of numerical codes that correspond to nearly every statutory offense charge. Each clerk's office can then convert its particular offense charge convention to these numerical codes for reporting purposes, thus eliminating the problem of non-uniform punctuation practices. The ISP has modified the CCH system to accept these numerical codes.

CHRI Masterplan

To place a framework around the various CHRI improvement strategies, the Ad Hoc Committee has recognized the need for a CHRI Masterplan. It is expected that the Masterplan will chart the future course of criminal record system development in Illinois and be a reference point for assessing future funding proposals. More importantly, the plan will serve as a guide

Info, from page 13

FBI is exploring how NIBRS data can be transmitted to it electronically from state collection agencies.

In addition to these major systems, the FBI also is developing international standards for exchanging electronic fingerprint data; certifying acceptability of additional livescan equipment; developing standards for judging electronic fingerprint data quality as it moves through each stage of processing; and, improving usability of criminal history records.

Also, the FBI has a mandate to develop a national instant criminal background check system due to passage of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act on Nov. 30, 1993. The system must be available by Nov. 30, 1998, so gun dealers can conduct background checks on all potential firearms purchasers. ■

for local agencies planning to automate their criminal justice records and/or enter into electronic record exchange networks.

Due to costs and other constraints, it is uncertain whether Illinois will achieve a totally automated statewide records network. However, it is probable that agencies in larger counties will install these types of integrated systems.

The Masterplan will therefore recognize the criminal record needs of agencies that go beyond the information currently contained on rap sheets, such as up-to-date information on open court cases, warrants and probation/parole status. These and other data elements comprise the more comprehensive kind of subject profiles that agencies often attempt to compile when making offender processing decisions.

As each of the strategies developed by the Ad Hoc Committee becomes fully operational, Illinois will move closer to meeting the criteria for CHRI improvement that BJA requires to waive the 5 percent set-aside. More importantly, as prescribed in the Committee's principles, these initiatives will lead toward a more accurate,

Integration, from page 14

projects depends on development of a common data dictionary and standardized transaction information. The agencies participating in network planning have identified 137 arrest data elements that can be shared. Each of these have been defined in a common data dictionary that will be used when agencies transfer electronic data.

The accomplishments achieved so far can be attributed to the cooperative efforts of all the agencies and individuals involved. There is a commitment from the highest levels of each agency to succeed in creating Cook County's first integrated criminal justice data system. ■

—Dennis McNamara, Court Operations
Circuit Court of Cook County

complete and timely criminal history record system that provides the information infrastructure for a fair and efficient criminal justice system in Illinois. ■

McNamara to retire from state service

On Sept. 30, 1994, the Authority's Olga McNamara will retire from the State of Illinois after more than 20 years of service.

McNamara began working for the state as an Account Technician I in 1974 for the Bureau of Employment Security. In January 1975, she was promoted to Account Technician II with the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission and then to Administrative Clerk in 1977.

On Jan. 1, 1983, McNamara's position was transferred to the Authority after the General Assembly established it to replace the Law Enforcement Commission. She was promoted to Administrative Assistant I in 1988 and transferred to the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council in 1988.

"I've known Olga for more than 10 years, and she has always possessed a sunny disposition, despite the often chaotic work environment at the Authority," said Gerry Ramker, the Council's program director. "She'll be missed." ■



Olga McNamara

Vehicle, from page 17

same number graduate as drop out or get pulled out," she said. Approximately 80 teens are now participating in VFC.

Program managers keep looking for ways to improve VFC. Last year, peer mentoring began. Selected graduates are paid approximately minimum wage, 15 hours a week, to be peer mentors to juveniles in the program. Mentors spend time at the United Charities Midway Center, talking to youths having trouble with the program, said the Council's Mann. Program officials believe the graduates also benefit from being role models, as the leadership roles strengthen their determination to stay out of trouble.

However, program officials are concerned that they can't help all who need it. "We're working out of only five Chicago Police

Department districts, so we're not able to provide services to the rest of the county and suburbs," Johnson said. The program hopes to eventually expand, and this concern likely will be addressed in the program's evaluation, which is due in October. Being conducted by IOTA Inc., it will assess the program's success to date and whether funding should be continued.

For now, though, some feel Vehicle For Change has already helped reduce the auto theft problem.

"I feel it's a success if 35 kids don't steal cars anymore," Program Monitor Mann said. And as for 13-year-old Reginald W., he said the program works. "I've learned a lot," he said. "(My mother) thinks it's doing a lot of good." ■

— Kristi Turnbaugh

Publications/Information Available from the Authority

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority annually publishes a large number of research reports, technical manuals, bulletins, newsletters, brochures and general information pieces. Copies of any of these materials are available free of charge by contacting the Authority's Information Resource Center at (312) 793-8550 or by writing the Authority at 120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016, Chicago, IL 60606-3997.

In addition, information on criminal justice computer information systems developed by the Authority, such as the Police Information Management System (PIMS) and Area-Wide Law Enforcement Radio Terminal System (ALERTS) is available by contacting the ICJIA Information Services Unit at the above address and phone number.

Below is a list of Authority publications printed since March 1993. Most older publications also still are available; please call or write to inquire.

Research and Research Methods

- ▼ Community Policing in Chicago, Year One: An Interim Report (July 1994, 48 pp.)
- ▼ The GeoArchive Handbook: A Guide to Developing a Geographic Database as an Information Foundation for Community Policing (July 1994, 56 pp.)
- ▼ Workshop on Crime Analysis Through Computer Mapping Proceedings: 1993 (July 1994, 380 pp.)
- ▼ Impact Analysis: Proposed "Truth-in-Sentencing" Legislation (June 1994, 22 pp.)
- ▼ Promising Approaches to Gangs: A Catalogue of Prevention and Suppression Programs in Illinois (June 1994, 28 pp.)
- ▼ Clemency for Battered Women Convicted of Killing Their Partners (May 1994, 8 pp.)
- ▼ Riverboat Gambling and Crime in Illinois (May 1994, 33 pp.)
- ▼ Illinois Strategy to Control Drug & Violent Crime (December 1993, 120 pp.)

- ▼ The Implementation of Illinois' Pre-Start Program: An Initial Evaluation (December 1993, 133 pp.)
- ▼ An Evaluation of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Unit (November 1993, 160 pp.)
- ▼ The Springfield Weed & Seed Initiative: A Process Description & Evaluation (September 1993, 120 pp.)
- ▼ The DuPage County State's Attorney's Drug Control Strategy Task Force: A Process Evaluation (May 1993, 41 pp., plus appendices)

Research and Research Methods (Bulletins)

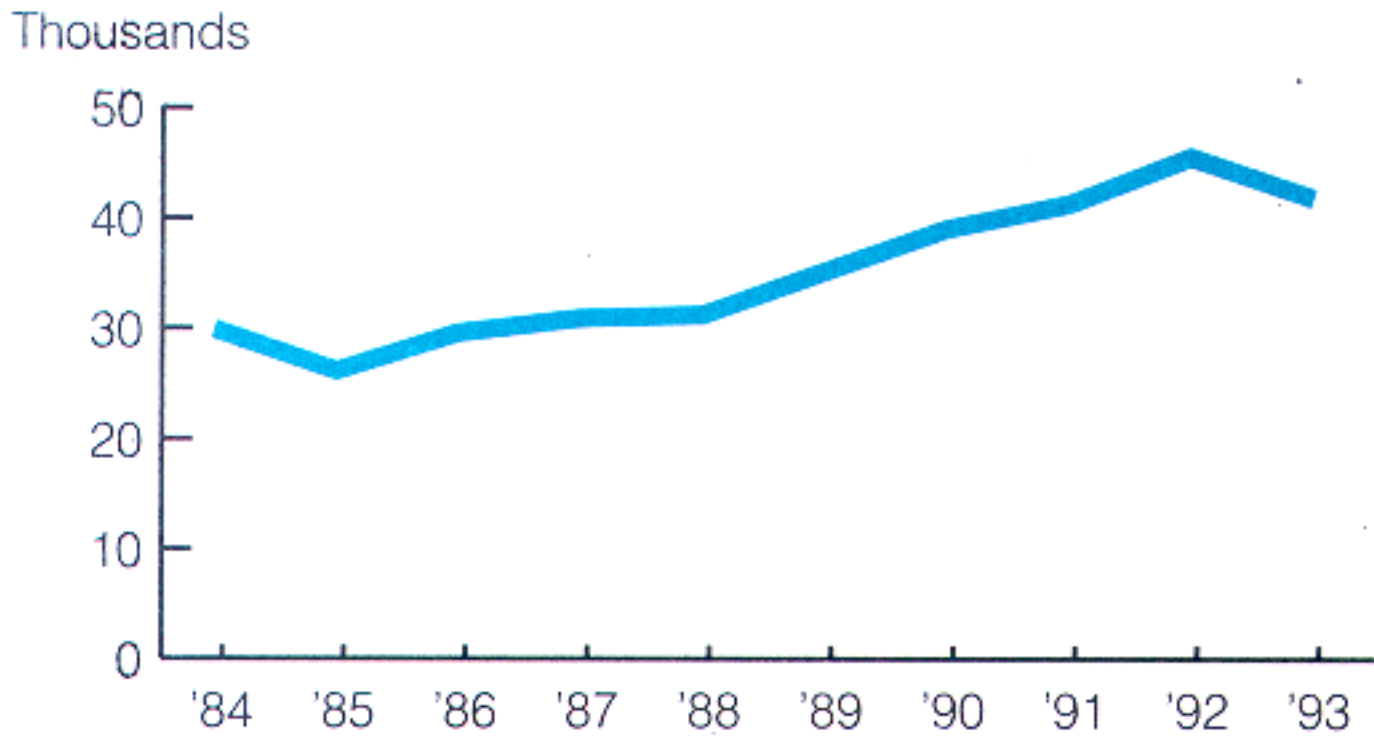
- ▼ On Good Authority: The Geography of Arrests for Violent Crime (August 1994, 4 pp.)
- ▼ On Good Authority: Juvenile Offenders & Violent Crime (May 1994, 4 pp.)
- ▼ On Good Authority: Firearms and Crime in Illinois (April 1993, 6 pp.)

General Information

- ▼ Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council Annual Report for 1992 (August 1994, 32 pp.)
- ▼ Consider the Consequences: 8 newsletters dealing with the legal consequences of drug abuse in Illinois. Topics include nuisance abatement and safe school zones.
- ▼ News & Notes: Newsletter of the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. Topics include "Carjacking: New twist on an old crime?" (October 1993, 4 pp.) and "Auditing the paper trail of vehicle-related businesses" (December 1993, 4 pp.)
- ▼ STACNEWS: The three issues of this newsletter deal with the spatial and temporal analysis of crime.
- ▼ Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority brochure
- ▼ Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council brochure

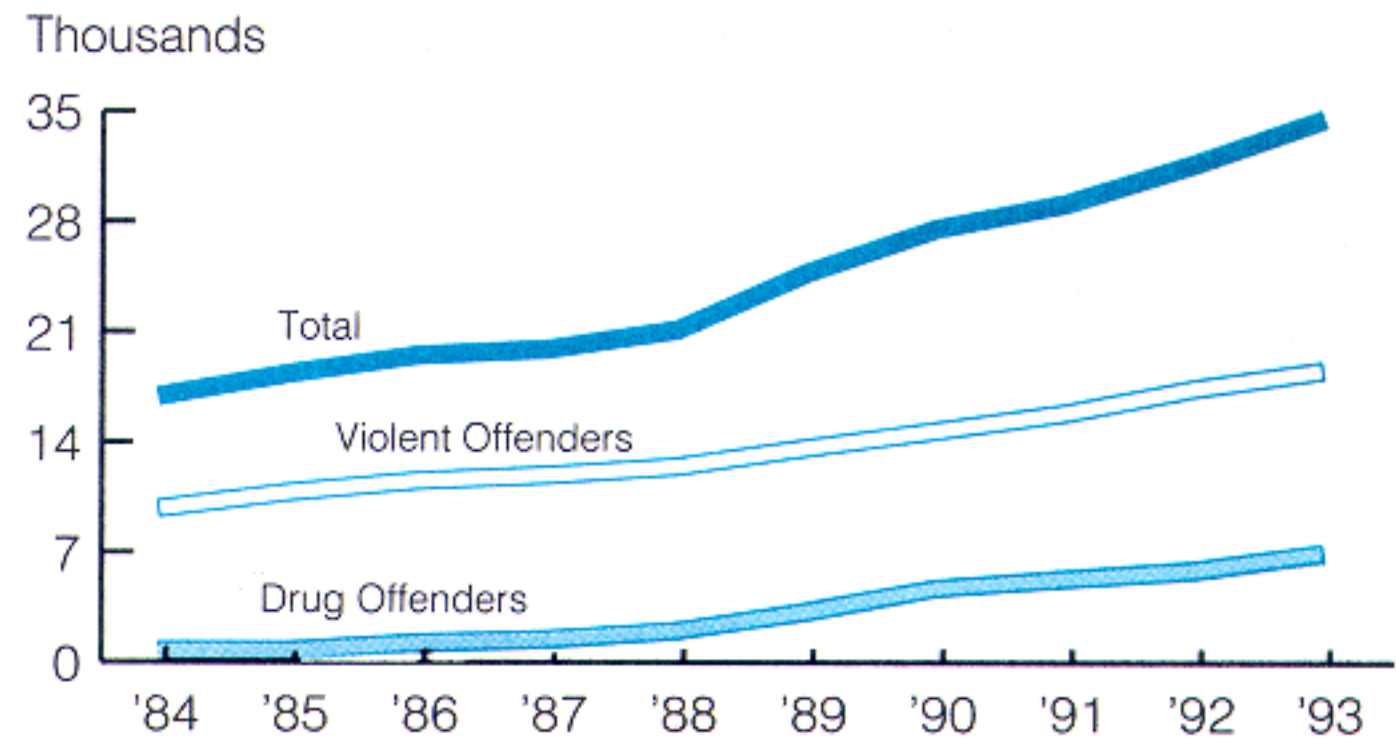
Trends

Statewide Active Felony Caseloads



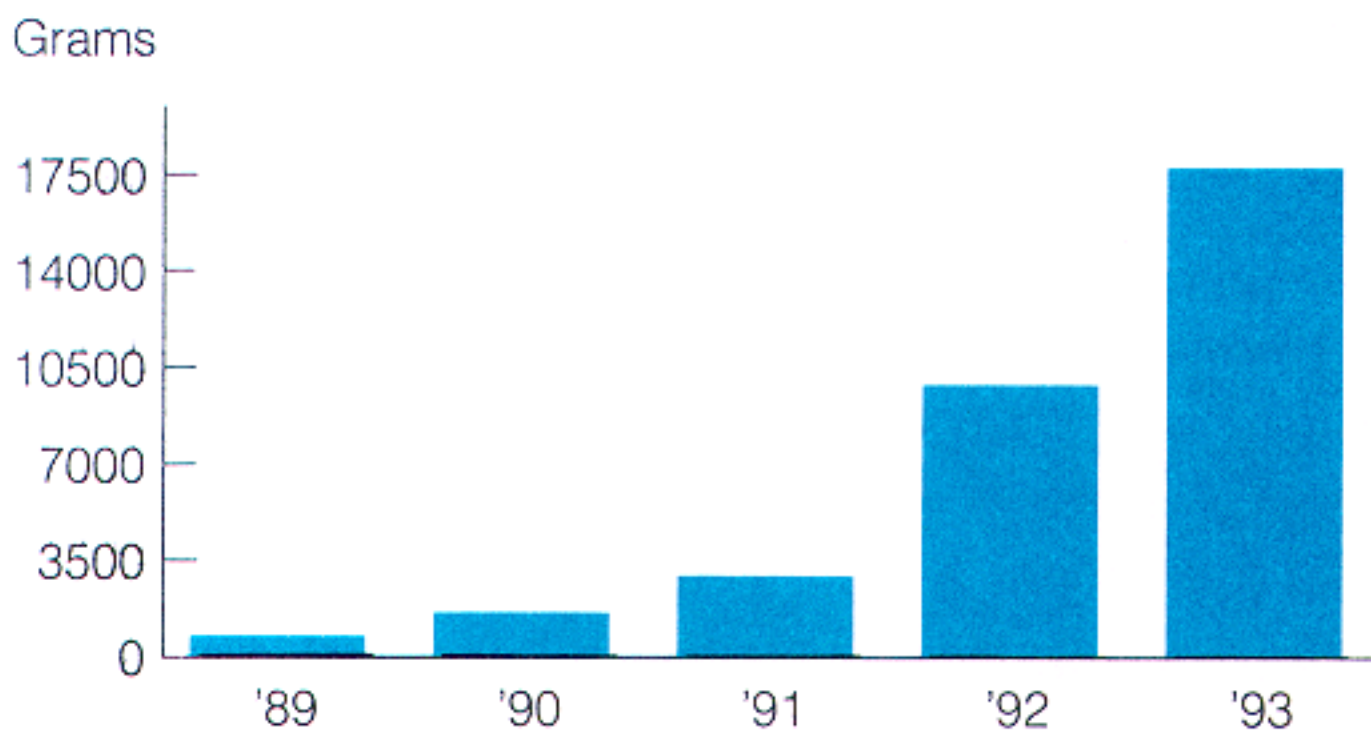
Source: Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Probation Division; all years are as of 12/31

State Prison Population in Illinois



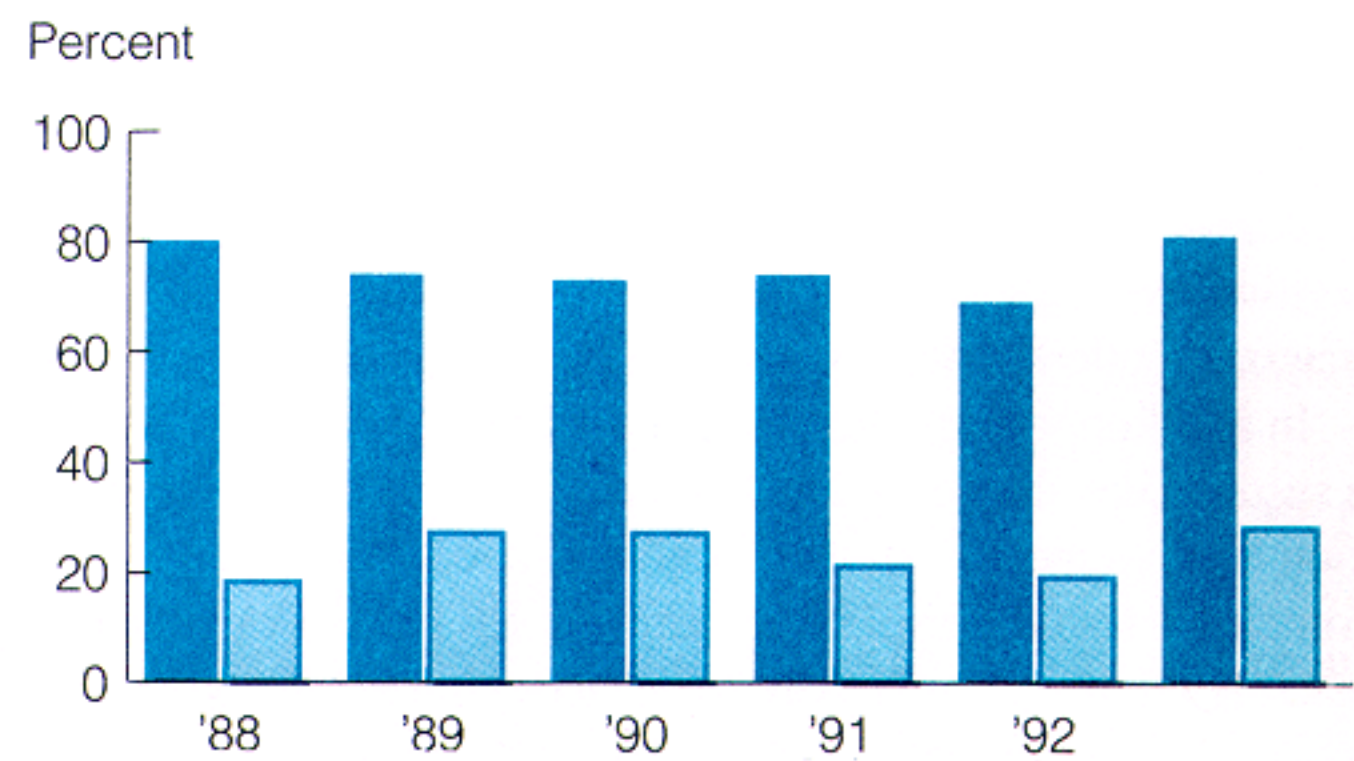
Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

Crack Cocaine Seizures Submitted to ISP



Source: Illinois State Police; includes totals for all of Illinois, except Chicago

Chicago Arrestees Testing Positive for Illegal Drugs



Source: Treatment Alternatives for Special Clients

■ Any Drug ■ Opiates



ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY

120 South Riverside Plaza
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3997
Voice: 312-793-8550
Fax: 312-793-8422
TDD: 312-793-4170

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NUMBER 4273

For address corrections, additions or deletions, write the information below and return this part of this page, including label, to Jamilah Owens at the Authority.
