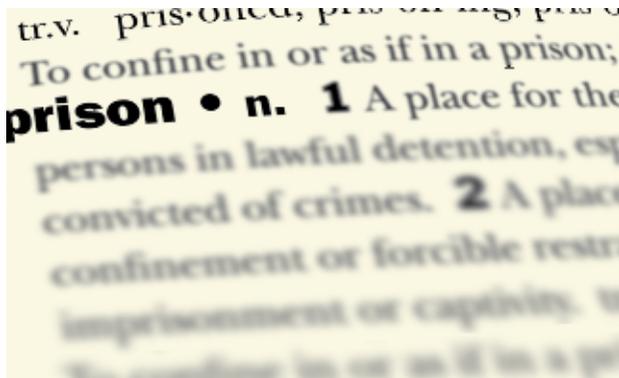


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The Stanford Executive Sessions on Sentencing and Corrections

Criminal Justice Information Sharing: Enhancing Early Intervention, Measuring Results



Report and Analysis

December 2007

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Published by:
The Stanford Criminal Justice Center (2008)
Crown Quadrangle
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This document was produced by the Stanford Criminal Justice Center in partnership with the Public Safety Performance Project of The Pew Charitable Trusts. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Public Safety Performance Project or The Pew Charitable Trusts.

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The Stanford Executive Sessions on Sentencing and Corrections, organized and hosted by the Stanford Criminal Justice Center (SCJC), is a forum for bringing together key California stakeholders – including academics and policymakers, institutional leaders and advocates – to develop concrete strategies for reform of the California sentencing and correctional systems.

The fourth meeting of the 2007 Executive Sessions focused on a major issue in the larger criminal justice system: data integration. We believe that data integration is an important investment in the “front-end” of the criminal justice process, one which allows the state to treat the numerous and varied stages of an offender’s involvement in the system holistically. The benefits of data integration can be conceived on two broad levels. First, officials at every discrete stage of the criminal justice process will make better decisions. But second, and ultimately most important, the benefits of better information at each stage accrue into a larger body of knowledge and evidence that enables officials at the state level to engage in sounder analysis and evaluation of macro-policies for the system as a whole. If the various courts and agencies in the system can share each other’s data, the system as a whole can better predict offender risk, share investigative and recidivist data across jurisdictions, and facilitate study of policies’ effectiveness. Data integration can thereby help California improve public safety, enhance accountability, and conserve resources.

In California, policymakers, practitioners, and academics are virtually united in the view that the state needs cost-effective and user-friendly data integration. A number of data integration systems have been proposed and in some cases even implemented at the county and state levels, but the challenge ahead is to weave these systems together.

The purpose of the meeting was to spark discussion, share knowledge about the status of integration projects at the national, state, and local level, and discover areas of common ground and dissent.

The session was divided into four roundtable discussions, addressing the following topics:

- Problems Facing Local Law Enforcement and Probation
- Current Proposals for Improving Information Sharing in California’s Criminal Justice System.
- Taking a Broader View: Information-Sharing Systems at the National Level and in Other Jurisdictions.

- Building Consensus and Developing a Criminal Justice Information System for California.

This report traces the sequence of discussion and summarizes the exchanges of information for each of the four topics. The report is intended to stimulate policymakers to extend these inquiries and to provide background information as they consider future proposals.

The key general consensus linking all four discussions is that improved data integration would make all parts of the criminal justice system function more effectively, more efficiently, and more accurately:

- During police and prosecutorial investigation, data integration can enhance information sharing across jurisdictional lines, particularly where law enforcement contacts do not result in arrests. This is particularly important in metropolitan areas, where criminal activity by individuals or gangs does not limit itself to individual cities or counties. Ideally, better information could lead to better crime prevention—not just the arrest and confinement of those who have already committed crimes.
- At sentencing, needs assessment data, combined with data on the effectiveness of various dispositional and programmatic alternatives, would enable judges to make more informed decisions about the best choice of sentence within statutory limits, whether incarceration in jail or prison, imposition of probation, or diversion to alternative programs. More accurate and detailed system-wide empirical information about actual time served under particular sentences would inform a judge’s decision about the proper term to set within statutory boundaries.

“... data integration is an important investment in the “front-end” of the criminal justice process, one which allows the state to treat the numerous and varied stages of an offender’s involvement in the system holistically.”

- For non-custodial sentences, cross-jurisdictional integration would help probation departments monitor their caseloads and determine whether a particular subject is facing charges or serving a term of probation in another county.
- In terms of incarceration, integration of data concerning offenders’ personal histories, including medical history, would avoid expensive and unnecessary duplication of intake screens, while also

enabling the state to comply more effectively with current federal court supervision of prison health care. Moreover, information from professional experts and from other prisons about demonstrably effective in-facility programs would enable staff to “teach prisoners how to do their time” in a way that would best reduce the risk of recidivism.

- With regard to the post-incarceration stage, data integration would enable better coordination between parole and local law enforcement. Local police would know who was out on parole, and have a better idea of the individual’s disciplinary record and/or gang affiliations in prison. In addition, information about mental and physical health would help parole officials coordinate their supervision of parolees with the county and local social service agencies who can assist parolees with reentry.

While data integration holds out undeniable promise for the state’s justice system, it poses challenges as well—most notably, ensuring that governments can learn to work together at all levels, sharing both resources and decision-making. All participants stressed that data integration has to make enough “business sense” to overcome possible cultural and organizational resistance to using new systems. That is, it must instill in policymakers faith that it offers sufficient technological and operational gain so that they will invest in it, as well instill this faith in managers, so they use it. ❖



Steven Chapman, Assistant Secretary, Office of Research, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

The program began with an introductory talk by David Ball, SCJC Research Fellow, outlining the opportunities and challenges data integration presents. His remarks are reproduced below:

“My interest in data integration issues arose from my research on mentally ill prisoners in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). In my research, I noted three things. First, data on mental illness among prisoners is hard to find within the CDCR. We lack good data on who the mentally ill population is or how large it is, and the lack of data results in undiagnosed and untreated illness and makes prison administration more difficult. Second, different branches of individual agencies do not share data. For example, when a prisoner is transferred from one prison to another, his prescriptions and psychiatric records do not always travel with him. This discontinuity of information results in treatment discontinuity. Third, there is insufficient sharing across jurisdictions or across agencies. For example, state prisons duplicate the mental health screens already given in county jail, thereby wasting resources and hampering efforts to treat mental illness early and often. Additionally, information does not travel outside the criminal justice system: when prisoners are released back to their counties of conviction, parole and county mental health agencies work in isolation, not cooperatively.

The results are expensive and avoidable. Untreated mental illness results in unnecessary incarceration (as offenders suffering mental health problems fail to comply with parole conditions) as well as longer sentences (because inmates do not comply with prison rules), and higher recidivism (revolving door parole revocations). In broader terms, these institutional failures make it difficult to formulate better prison policies—it is hard to know what to fix without knowing precisely what’s broken, and whom it affects.

At the same time, better data integration faces statutory and regulatory impediments to sharing, cultural impediments within and among agencies, and a great deal of inertia. It is difficult to get agencies and jurisdictions to reorient themselves towards cooperation across agency and jurisdictional lines.

Mental health is illustrative of the broader challenges facing the state. First, there are data deficits in many institutions: Although progress is being made inside agencies, particularly the DOJ and the state court system, individual agencies often lack information. Some agencies simply do not know what information they have, or how to find information that may actually be available to

them. Having data is obviously a prerequisite to sharing it. Second, even where there is data, that data is not shared within and among agencies vertically—from local to state and vice versa—and horizontally—among municipalities, for example. Finally, there are missed opportunities to collaborate with other agencies that are not strictly part of the criminal justice system but that influence criminal justice outcomes: alternatives to incarceration or innovative re-entry programs require collaboration, and that requires data integration.

Data integration has a great upside. First, pre-dispositional investigation and diversion can lower crime rates and improve public safety before crimes are committed. Second, data integration can help with disposition of individual cases – setting sentences, evaluating alternative sanctions, programming and treatment in prison, and planning and implementing re-entry. And third, to return to the broadest perspective, the data the system produces can help officials design better overall statewide sentencing and correctional policies. Through individual longitudinal studies and systemic analyses, we can better predict prison population growth and perhaps unearth new relationships driving criminality and recidivism.

A great virtue of data sharing is that it leads to ‘positive network externalities.’ That is, the value of each piece of data increases when more relationships are made between it and other data, just as the value of each node on a network increases the more nodes there are. It is positive because it helps, but it is an externality because much of the benefit to my producing data is realized externally, by others. But the externality phenomenon

“ It is difficult to get agencies and jurisdictions to reorient themselves towards cooperation across agency and jurisdictional lines. ”

means that the system tends to underinvest in data integration: any one actor in the system may say, ‘The benefit to me individually might not be greater than the cost to me individually, even if the total systemic benefit is greater than the total systemic cost.’ The total efficiency gains, for example, accrue not only to those who compute their data, but also to those who have access to it. Without coordination or subsidy, then, individual actors will not act in the larger interest of the system.

It is not that difficult to make a case to officials in the system to join an existing network, since the new en-

trants will gain the benefits of existing integration, and the existing members will also benefit from the new entrants' information. But it is another and more difficult thing to get a new network started. So I want to suggest that we keep network effects in mind as we discuss data sharing networks, keeping in mind both the tremendous benefits, which I think we are all aware of, but also of the challenges in getting there, given that externalities will tend to produce systemic underinvestment.

To make this a little more concrete, our first session deals with local parole and law enforcement issues. There are local benefits to better data systems, like data-driven policing or computer-aided dispatch, that are realized within an agency, but there are benefits realized externally once those systems are networked. If investigative information is shared—that is, information about stops, calls, or anything that did not result in an arrest—a particular crime might be avoided, or a juvenile might be deterred from criminality in general. If a crime is avoided, society benefits, the individual benefits, and the jails, courts, prisons, and parole system have saved resources, by never needing them in the first place. It is difficult to put a price on this savings, however, and it is certainly going to be hard to get a city or county council to spend its money on data sharing in order to save the state prison system money.

So how do we get there? I see three ready examples of low-hanging fruit.

The first example is the set of changes an agency can make that will save it money in an absolute sense, while simultaneously improving systemic results. These are improvements that will either save a department money or an individual time – and just so happen to simultaneously benefit other agencies and jurisdictions. For example, paperless courts save money within a court and across a court system, in addition to making data sharing outside a court system relatively cheap. The California court Case Management System (CMS) overhaul is a natural place to start and build from. If the court system is actively improving its own processes, it can more feasibly encourage other agencies to improve their own by joining in networked innovations. Such approaches are probably superior to the alternative approach of a regulatory tax—i.e., a state penalty imposed on agencies that do not automate or meet new mandated standards.



David Ball, Research Fellow, Stanford Criminal Justice Center

A second low-hanging fruit is a tit-for-tat sharing program horizontally. Agencies with robust internal data systems can play a game of ‘You show me your data, I’ll show you mine.’ Agencies will be getting while also giving, thus offsetting the organizational costs with benefits.

A third possibility might be to piggyback on existing information technology expenditures. If an agency is buying a new database, it is relatively cheap to make sure it can be integrated with other systems. Whenever an agency is making IT investments, the agency should think about connectivity to internal and external systems.

But even if we can capitalize on all these opportunities, it is clear that there are going to be other gains that will require something more—for example, where there are data deficits and agencies and jurisdictions need to spend money to get their own houses in order. Lawmakers at all levels need to redefine the “enterprise” in enterprise architecture and redefine how they budget for IT. These changes might be less methodological, or legal, than cultural—that is, they will depend on individuals in both staff and management making personal commitments to work differently.

At the Attorney General’s Criminal Justice Advisory Committee meeting last week, Reggie Chappelle from the California Highway Patrol (CHP) discussed the CHP’s e-citation program. E-citations transmit citations electronically from officers in the field to local courts for processing. The program was a success, but the officers’ hardware costs money to buy and maintain, money the CHP does not have. One representative of the Orange County court system said that data entry costs alone for

CHP citations were \$1.25 per ticket. He suggested that the Orange County courts help fund the CHP e-citation program. While the suggestion is eminently sensible, some participants suggested it was unrealistic. County governments are unlikely to authorize payments to a state agency, even if it saves the county money.

These are deep problems arising from the need to govern in a networked fashion. Ultimately, though, I want to go even further, to flip the challenge on its head and suggest that criminal justice data integration can actually be a model of inter-agency, inter-jurisdictional integration that other fields could use. Many problems are this complicated and this inter-jurisdictional, and the ways in which we solve them here in California, or within criminal justice, can be exported to other places and other problems. So this process yields a sort of meta-externality to other kinds of network problems.” ❖



Curtis Hill, Sheriff, San Benito County

The theme of this discussion was that information system integration can help local law enforcement agencies reduce paperwork, make records more available, and share information that is otherwise lost, such as non-dispositional police contacts. It raised several key questions: Would investing in a comprehensive statewide front-end information-sharing system help local law enforcement and probation departments in California conserve resources? Assess offender risks? Monitor offenders? What would an ideal information-sharing system look like from a local law enforcement perspective?

Curtis Hill, Sheriff of San Benito County, began the discussion by noting that his new officers have an expectation that data will be available when they need it—what he called “Google law enforcement.” As Sheriff Hill put it, “There is information sharing now, but it is just inefficient.” When he or his officers need to know something, they get on the phone or send faxes. Often, however, his officers cannot get the information they want, or they cannot get it where and when they need it.

At the same time, many state-level information systems inefficiently rely on specialized hardware – single-use terminals for such dedicated tasks as running a particular suspect’s fingerprints, rather than terminals that can do multiple tasks and link to multiple data bases. As a result, this hardware is unused except when a need happens to arise for its specific function.

Sheriff Hill has problems with data sharing not only across county lines, but within his county. Individual departments do not coordinate the purchasing and installation of computer systems, so his staff makes redundant investments in systems that cannot be easily linked. “Cultural problems” are also an obstacle: “People have a death grip on their data.”

In the general discussion that followed, a consensus emerged that little data is being shared in California. Inmates are screened when they enter county jail, and the screens are duplicated when they are transferred to state prison. The data cannot be transferred electronically, but even if it could, intake assessment tools are not uniform.

Concurrent supervision is also a problem. Many inmates are on parole or probation (or both) in multiple counties. There is little, if any, coordination of this supervision. Offenders are subject to the same kinds of assessments (e.g. drug tests), with no coordination of their release plan. On a more general level, there is no centralized model for probation – which after all, is a county responsibility, while parole is the responsibility of the state. There are 58 different probation systems in

58 different counties. The system overall does not have the information necessary to design better systems, or to see which ones are working.

Finally, paper record keeping suffers two basic inefficiencies: distribution and duplication. Time and resources have to be spent physically transporting records from the police station to the DA’s office, or from jail to prison, and funds are wasted in producing multiple documents containing the same information. Even if California took an extremely modest step toward electronic record keeping without any high-tech data sharing – for example, by merely scanning paper documents and then e-mailing them as attachments – the state could function in a more cost-effective and efficient manner.

Participants concurred that data sharing can yield significant gains.

- At early phases of investigation, local law enforcement would have a more accurate picture of crime patterns that do not conform to jurisdictional lines. Currently, information sharing requires the establishment of joint task forces, or, on an individual level, shot-in-the-dark phone calls to other agencies. Systematizing data sharing would make local law enforcement more effective in investigating and preventing criminal activity.
- At sentencing, judges would have more information about an offender’s criminal history, including police contacts that did not result in arrests. Judges would also have access to risk assessments performed by parole, or the prison system, or other counties. System-wide data could also aid judges in deciding whether probation or diversion into drug court or mental health court would be appropriate.
- During incarceration, if prison or jail officials have reliable needs assessments, they can guide individual prisoners in “learning how to do their time.” Currently, inmates learn how to do time from other prisoners, and the result is an exacerbation of gang problems. With better data, prison officials could formulate programs to enable the prisoners to remain crime-free upon their release.
- Upon release into parole, data integration would give local law enforcement a more complete picture of what new problems might arise: whether the parolee has new gang affiliations, substance abuse problems, or mental health needs. Parole and law enforcement could work together, each serving as a kind of early warning system. Finally, data sharing could extend beyond the criminal justice system to encompass re-entry services like housing, mental

health counseling, and the like.

Ideally, data integration would pave the way for comprehensive case management, where an individual's case was shared and coherently developed from intake to release. Individual agencies would receive data from the prior agency (law enforcement to the DA, for example) and pass it on to the next (DA to the judge at sentencing). The result would be better coordination of policy and great savings in resources as the system avoids any duplication of effort. There would be no missed opportunities or hidden dangers.

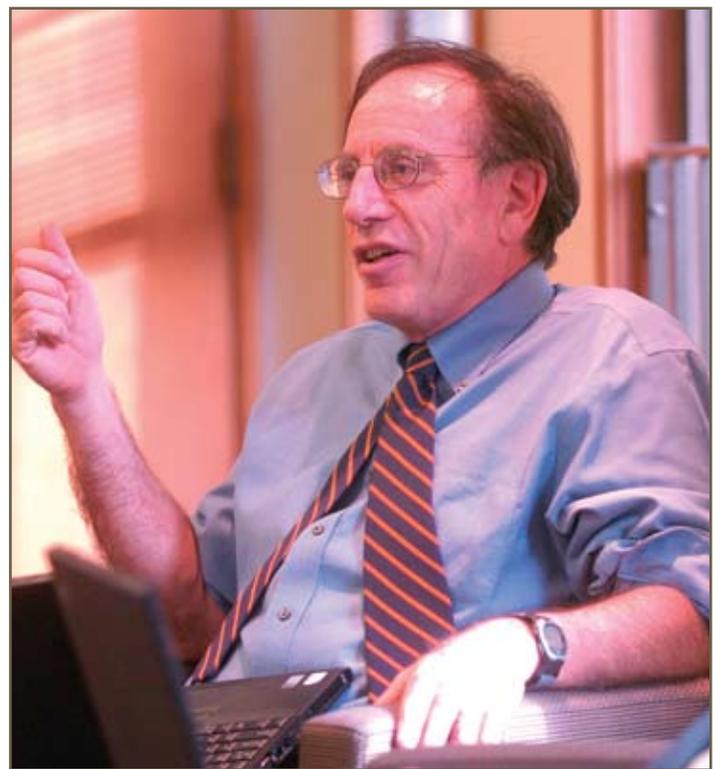
Although all participants agreed with the benefits, all also agreed that the devil was in the details, with the following three areas noted in particular.

- First is a lack of funding and coordination across agencies and jurisdictional lines. Officials in each organization or governmental entity tend to say that the particular problems are not “theirs.” Most notably, county officials express disinclination to pay for what they see as the state’s problem. If data sharing made probation more effective, and counties began diverting people from incarceration towards probation, the state would save money. The state, however, is not in the practice of paying counties for probation, or for crime reduction in general. How could the state offer financial incentives to municipal and county governments, incentives that would save it money in the long run?
- One participant suggested that local data integration initiatives might be better, given these funding problems. Localities could experiment with what works for their particular area and crime level. (San Diego County’s Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) was cited as an example.) The result will be a local gain even if the state does not respond, but there is also the chance that the state will acknowledge the improvement and perhaps subsidize it. But the limited reach of these systems, particularly when offenders are sent to prison and released into parole, means that the state should be involved at least somewhat with local systems.
- A second problem from the local perspective is the state’s history of broken promises. Even where the state offers some indication of helping counties or cities, local law enforcement officials see a lack of follow up on the state’s part. A state-level reformer might lose an election or get “termed out,” or the political winds may start blowing in a different direction, leaving the county or city with systems

and processes that are no longer supported. Local governments want to proceed with caution, so they are not stuck with the bill.

- Third, the issue of support is particularly salient given the public’s view of crime control. Re-entry coordination, for example, assumes a “harm reduction” approach that is oriented towards reintegration and treatment of offenders. Public opinion, however, takes a different approach. Criminals are to be punished, not rehabilitated. It is difficult to muster public opinion in favor of non-punitive expenditures on criminal populations.

A general consensus developed that advocates of data integration need to frame its benefits primarily in terms of protecting the public safety. All actors in the criminal justice system need to make the case that data integration will help them do their jobs more effectively so as to enhance accurate and complete investigation, and the quality and efficiency of justice. The public case for data integration must be made through clear expression of a “business principle” – it has to make sense in terms of the organizational objectives of a given agency, and in terms of the individuals using it. The technology itself will not persuade either the public or government officials. What will persuade them is proof that data integration will improve business practices and workflow. ❖



Robert Weisberg, Professor, Stanford Law School

Effective information sharing systems require implementation of state-level standards by state-level managers and the buy-in of law enforcement agencies at all levels of government. In this light, the second session considered several key questions: What kinds of information-sharing systems are being proposed and/or implemented at the state level? Are they integrated with each other and with other state and county departments? Should they be?

Tony Doonan, of the California DOJ, helped frame the current big picture for the state. California, he explained, maintains several large criminal justice databases, among them databases for fingerprints and gang membership. These databases are centralized, but the state staff who manage them have not achieved much cooperation, planning, and dialogue with local law enforcement. Thus, counties and municipalities do not feel much of a sense of ownership over the state's systems. The problem looking forward is that the state has few financial resources and enjoys little trust among local and county officials. The state cannot impose standards without funding their implementation in counties and municipalities, and the state cannot ask local law enforcement to comply voluntarily without overcoming the mistrust localities have towards them. Local agencies want to know that their investments will pay off. Even moving towards electronic records keeping is expensive; local officials present at the meeting wanted financial help from the state to help pay for the transition.

“... we know how this integrated system is going to work, but devoting resources to integration, and getting agencies to cooperate with each other, requires cultural changes and institutional commitment.”

The irony is that California used to be a model of data sharing 30 years ago. When California's first systems were built, they were a national model. Unfortunately, the state has underinvested in these systems since then, leaving legacy systems programmed in obsolete computer languages, or running operating systems that have not been commercially available for years.

Professor Clark Kelso, who served from 2003 until mid-December 2007 as the state's Chief Information Officer, explained current efforts to improve information technology in the criminal justice system in particular, but also in California government more generally. The CIO's office is trying to coordinate procurement

throughout the state in order to increase the state's bargaining power with vendors. It is also promoting open systems and interoperability. The CIO's efforts have the support of the Governor, but some local officials remain skeptical of the state's commitment. Indeed, as of December the CIO did not have a permanent staff.

Professor Kelso was optimistic that the state would find a way to share criminal justice data, and to do so, moreover, in a way that used distributed, networked systems. Participants generally favored distributed systems because they gave individual agencies more control over the look, feel, and functionality of their end systems. Networking and data translation adds a layer of complexity to the system, but as long as data is standardized, distributed systems can deliver data wherever it is needed.

Professor Kelso argued that the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), a national standard for the exchange of criminal justice data, had solved the issue of standards. As he put it, “We have standards; we just need to implement them. We need to build the networks and turn them on.”

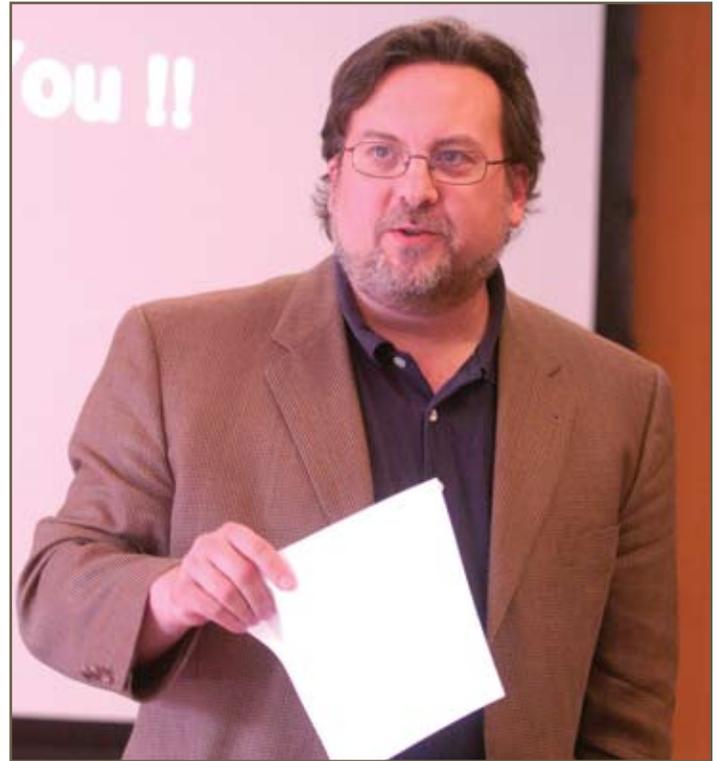
To do that, he said, required buy-in from agencies' management. In effect, we know how this integrated system is going to work, but devoting resources to integration, and getting agencies to cooperate with each other, requires cultural changes and institutional commitment.

Moving to a more practical level, participants then discussed two projects that might lead to greater integration: data integration in the state court system, and Vision 2015.

The Courts: the state court system is currently moving towards paperless case management. The resulting system will unify the court system both within each county and among county systems across the state. As part of this process, the court system will create data standards for criminal histories, offenses and offense levels, and sentences. Participants generally agreed once this work is completed, other agencies, such as law enforcement, jails, prisons, and parole will be able to link into this system. The courts are a big part of the puzzle; once they have a system up and running, joining the system will yield immediate benefits, particularly for sheriffs, who run jails. For example, integrating with the courts will help sheriffs coordinate the movement of inmates for trial and sentencing.

Vision 2015. The Vision 2015 program is an initiative of the state DOJ and is currently in the planning phase. The plan would put mobile computing units in the field, allowing officers to transmit data for cite-and-release offenses electronically to state court systems. Because cite-and-release offenders are not processed through central booking, each year there are a significant number of “orphan” citations resulting from citations with no court disposition, or dispositions with no recorded citation. The plan is to use the mobile cite-and-release computers as a vehicle for data integration.

Although participants agreed that Vision 2015 is a sound idea, a consensus nevertheless emerged that it is an example of a somewhat lower state priority in the wider context of data integration. What proved salient about discussion of Vision 2015 was precisely that it did not present the strongest example of a compelling “business proposition” that is necessary to overcome the various obstacles to data improvement in the state. The recording gap, while a problem that merits rectification, does not pose a major threat to public safety, nor does it cause a major disruption in interagency coordination. It is not on the scale of such concerns as a failure to ensure proper medical treatment, or failure to coordinate among prosecutor, defense lawyer, judge, and police/sheriff in electronically scheduling a hearing. Thus, Vision 2015 served as a useful contrasting



Clark Kelso, Former Chief Information Officer, State of California

example to help identify and highlight more compelling information needs. ❖

In implementing information sharing systems, other jurisdictions have grappled with questions such as whether to conform to national data standards and whether to use a warehousing system or a decentralized system. Two speakers, David Roberts, of Global Justice Consulting Public Safety IT Magazine, and Mark Perbix, of The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, presented information about the international and national scene.

European data integration has taken place both within and across borders. Europe now has EU-wide arrest warrants that can be executed in all member states, as well as evidentiary warrants. The EU also maintains a central register of criminal convictions.

The United Kingdom alone has spent 2.2 billion pounds integrating its criminal justice system nationwide. Police, courts, probation, and prisons share data throughout the country. The UK's particular approach is to network existing agency systems, rather than take all the data from agencies and centralize it in a single database. This alternative enables agencies to continue to manage their own workflows, while enabling national-level coordination.

In the United States, states tend to organize themselves as follows. At the county and local levels, agencies maintain their own IT systems, participate in state-wide planning efforts, and interface with state systems. The states are repositories of information, particularly criminal histories, and manage IT standards and any networking infrastructure. States also serve as the gateway to federal systems.

On a national level, there is a convergence between public safety and homeland security. Existing data integration efforts piggyback on anti-terrorist programs. The national emphasis is on organized crime, major incident response, and natural disasters. The federal government also propagates national data exchange standards, but these are the result of collaboration with local and state entities, not a federal imposition. The old standard was the Global Justice Exchange Data Model (GJXDM), which has been replaced by NIEM.

NIEM is essentially a huge dictionary of terms, providing a common data language between given systems. While NIEM is a standard, it has enough flexibility to adapt itself to particular uses. Which data sets get translated into NIEM-compliant formats depends on the work that an agency is doing. For example, NIEM understands "cases," but how a given system defines "cases" depends on a number of

factors. Law enforcement, the judicial systems, and corrections will each define a "case" differently. NIEM maps each of these understandings to a common term so there is no misinterpretation. In Mr. Roberts's words, "Everyone's data is translated into Esperanto." The Achilles' heel of NIEM is that there aren't units that are strictly defined. Agencies still have to collaborate on how particular information gets translated into the common terms.

Even though NIEM has facilitated sharing, states must decide how data is shared. Is the system going to respond to particular queries, give users different options at various points in their workflow, or push out data as alerts to relevant agencies? And how do states limit access to information so that privacy is maintained?

Mark Bergstrom, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing, added some observations on his state's experience with its Justice Network (JNET) data sharing program. That state has built the physical network and enacted rules at the state agency level. The state interfaces with the counties; any municipality wishing to join JNET has to do so through a county. This limits the number of systems accessing the state system, and encourages counties to organize themselves, thereby helping to develop local support for the system.

The big themes, then, across the United States, concern how states share authority over technological and semantic issues. This question is closely related to funding. There are up-front costs, but the systems require funding for maintenance and upgrades. Securing sustainable funding is vital and requires strong support from management, operations, and state leadership. ❖



David Roberts, Principal, Public Safety IT Magazine

The final session synthesized the main points from the earlier presentations and discussion and generated ideas about concrete future steps.

There was broad consensus among participants on what an ideally integrated system would look like. An ideal system would combine universal functionality and local control. Its goals and features can be summarized as follows:

BROAD GOALS

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES:

- Capture the data at its origin, rather than reconstruct it later.
- Capture data once, and use it many times.
- Create business propositions for using data.
- Make sure systems function so that “a day's work can be done in a day.”

UNIVERSAL FUNCTIONS:

- Allow users to query multiple databases without signing on and off.
- Push information to where it is needed, relying on actions within the originating information system. For example, if a parole officer indicates that a parolee has missed a meeting, push the information to local law enforcement.
- Consider other models of information dissemination, such as subscriptions to notifications, whereby users know that they will automatically receive information in relevant categories that they have pre-designated (a good example is a subscription for alerts about new parole violators).
- Allow research functions on data sets, so that policies can be studied and refined.

LOCAL CONTROL:

- Systems must make sense to management and end users; imposed systems do not get used or supported.
- Systems have to be integrated into the existing workflow.
- Agencies should have their own systems that are



Mary Greenwood, Public Defender, Santa Clara County

designed around their operational requirements and that incorporate current capabilities and hardware.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- To achieve consensus on the ultimate system, focus on what the system will be used for, how it will help agencies conduct their work, and how it will improve public safety.
- Establish short-term and long-term milestones, thereby allowing participants to see some immediate gains along the road to long-term improvements.
- Create ways for stakeholders, funders, and policymakers to communicate with each other, and crucially, to collaborate with and engage end-users.
- Ensure that the commitment to data integration, once made, is one that will endure over time.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS OF THE CALIFORNIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

THE STATE:

The state has produced individual NIEM-compliant data standards and should continue to publish and publicize them. But the state needs to do a better job of coordinating with counties and municipalities – not just in terms of telling them what they are doing, but

also listening to them and working with them. Pennsylvania has a “compliance flight path” that lays out the steps for counties to join statewide networks. This flight path was developed in collaboration with and in response to counties’ concerns. It works only because it meets their needs, not because the state imposed it.

COURTS:

The courts, as indicated earlier, are building a data sharing system. The courts need to educate partner agencies and integrate with local law enforcement. Courts can use systems to coordinate scheduling with sheriffs, public defenders, and DA’s, and can use these connections to build out more data-intensive functionality.

COUNTIES:

Counties have a large role to play in data integration but, because of Proposition 13, little discretionary funding. Most county money comes from state entitlements, and budgets across the state are strapped. It will be crucial for agencies within a county to join team efforts to request funds, and they will need to show a high likelihood of concrete financial benefits. Counties can potentially serve as laboratories for data integration. Agencies can iron out some of the details and counties can organize themselves. In proceeding this way, counties will not risk sudden withdrawal of state support due to changing political tides or sponsors who have been termed out of office.

CHALLENGES

CHANGING THE CULTURE AT THE END USER LEVEL:

Technological investment generates returns only if people use the new capabilities. This requires two things. First, the initial data must be captured accurately and quickly. Second, because staff operators must ultimately be trained in using the systems they need, staff should be consulted throughout a project so that they have input on what is useful to them. It

is much easier to give people what they have asked for than to tell them why they need something.

FUNDING DISCUSSIONS:

Several participants reported that funding requests seem to follow the same rule: costs are absolute, and savings are speculative. That is, policymakers accept costs as given and place the burden of proof on savings. It is impossible to prove future savings, but every attempt should be made to show policymakers why savings forecasts are not just guesses, and why ignoring potential long-term savings and focusing only on the short-term has led to the budget and prison crises of today.

THE PARADOX OF MEASUREMENT:

Ignorance can be bliss when it comes to analysis of systems. Right now we do not know the true scope of inefficiency in the California criminal justice system. One result of improved data integration might be that the measurements show a worsening system as data-gathering tools get more accurate, simply because the earlier numbers were too optimistic. It will also be difficult to set realistic targets during implementation. Thus, the state should include knowledge of data deficits as one of the goals of an integrated system. As we learn more about the limits of our operational knowledge, we can then readjust the yardsticks by which we measure outcomes.

THE CDCR: A DATA BLACK HOLE:

Finally, the CDCR is crucial to any integrated data system, but the system has almost no internal data capacity and concomitantly little ability to transmit to or receive information from other parts of the California criminal justice system. Parole officers have a difficult time learning who is going to be released onto parole and tracking prisoners whose parole is revoked. Similar complaints were heard from DA’s and Sheriffs at the meeting. As one participant put it, “If the basics are not working, how can we do the creative work?” ❖

Participants in this meeting converged on a remarkably clear diagnosis – California’s criminal justice system suffers from a surprisingly underdeveloped, nearly non-existent data integration system. Currently, state and local agencies do not capture, distribute, and deploy information in the holistic way necessary for a sound overall system. Data integration is essential not only to enhance efficiency and fairness at the local and county level, but also to inform wise policy formation and analysis at the state level. Indeed, removing institutional, technological, and cultural barriers to information sharing is itself a crucial policy initiative that will set us in the right direction. California’s public safety and fiscal responsibility depend on enhancing our ability to share information at all levels of the criminal justice system, from investigation through reentry. ❖



The Honorable Jeffrey Almquist, Superior Court Judge, Santa Cruz County

PHOTO GALLERY



LEFT: Delores Carr, District Attorney, Santa Clara County.



RIGHT: The Honorable Edwin Meese III, Ronald Reagan Distinguished Fellow, The Heritage Foundation.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:

Tony Doonan, Assistant Bureau Chief, California Department of Justice; Ashley Cannon, Assistant to the Director, Vera Institute of Justice, Center for Sentencing and Corrections; Dr. Richard Kern, Executive Director, Virginia Sentencing Commission; Mark Bergstrom, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing; and Michael Connelly, Director of Policy, Oklahoma Department of Corrections.



LEFT: Kim Barrett, Chief Probation Officer, San Luis Obispo County.



RIGHT: Jeanne Woodford, Chief Probation Officer, City of San Francisco.

LEFT: Barry Melton, Board of Directors, California Public Defenders Association.

RIGHT: Kara Dansky, Executive Director, Stanford Criminal Justice Center



