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Information Found, Information Shared

Delivering on the promise of criminal justice integration is difficult. Most states have attempted to introduce Integrated Criminal Justice Information Systems (ICJIS), but results have been mixed, at best. And unfortunately, these systems usually cost tens of millions of dollars and take years to deploy.

Law enforcement personnel in virtually all-50 states have long been hampered by a lack of real-time, detailed information about inmates held in county jails. That has changed in the state of Arkansas, where a standard has been set for ICJIS with a new statewide, integrated offender tracking system that allows law enforcement personnel to communicate with each other electronically, in real time.

JusticeXchange™ has been deployed by the Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC) as a key element of its overall ICJIS strategy. This technology was developed by Appriss®, a Louisville, KY-based provider of products and services

for law enforcement agencies.

JusticeXchange™ is an ICJIS application providing instant access to information about current and former offenders held in jails throughout the state. This includes biographical information, charges, photographs, incident reports, and information on the state's 40,000-plus parolees and probationers. The information is made available to law enforcement agencies throughout the State of Arkansas and other states accessing the application.

By logging onto the secure website, users can check current and previous booking information, create photo lineups in a matter of seconds for identification by victims or witnesses, post "watches" for individuals wanted for questioning, and view an offender's previous booking and charge information.

Technology Grant

Early in 2001, U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) helped to pave the way for the project by encouraging criminal justice officials in her home state to apply for a technology grant funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. In a collaborative effort, the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association and the Arkansas Crime Information Center provided input on developing a system that would allow jails across the state to communicate with each other electronically. ACIC assumed the state's task of project man-

agement and administration for the new system.

The biggest challenge of the project was to create and support the technology infrastructure required to collect information from the 66 county jail management systems in Arkansas. The available funding for the project — about \$400,000 — would easily finance equipment needed to get a department up and running, but wouldn't come close to covering an entirely new state-wide network for 75 counties.

Fortunately, there was an affordable solution. The new system was deployed using the existing data network used to support the state's victim notification system — VINE®. Building on the VINE data network would allow Arkansas to get the new system up and running in a fraction of the time and at a much lower cost than would otherwise have been required.

The VINE data network collects offender information in real time from jail management systems in more than 1,200 facilities across the country. The network currently processes over 13 million records each month in 36 states, covering 58 percent of the nation's state and local inmate population.

Developers set out to build JusticeXchange complete with specific features on the wish lists of the agencies involved. Foremost, users needed a simple way to find and share information, and accordingly, the system was built around four capabilities:

- Offender search file – obtain information about

a current or past offender in the system's database.

- Watch file – create a list of wanted persons. The system alerts the user if one of these offenders is added to the database as the result of an arrest. -In addition, as a result of the cooperative effort on the part of two state agencies, ACIC and the Arkansas Department of Community Correction, booking incidents on probationers or parolees cause the triggering of automatic e-mail notifications to supervising parole and probation officers. Additionally, all booking facilities and law enforcement agencies are notified of previously entered cautions and warnings whenever an incident occurs with a probationer or parolee.

- Photo lineup – create a photo lineup from the archive of photos in the systems database. . Photographs of an offender are automatically exchanged between the state's parole and probation web based system and JusticeXchange™.

- Incident reports – jail personnel can add notes about offender-relat-

ed incidents to the database.

The automatic query process gives Arkansas officials immediate real time access to check for criminal history records on newly booked offenders against state and Federal "hot files" databases, including warrants, protective orders, and sex offender classification.

Although this interface has only been in operation for a few months, it has already produced dramatic results. Several absconded offenders were located in county jails, and many of the probation and parole officers report success.

"I received an e-mail informing me that someone on my caseload had been arrested," explained Officer Nicholas Stewart of the Little Rock Probation Office. "I no longer have to rely on the truthfulness of an offender to tell if he or she has been booked into a jail facility."

Kathy Gattin is the Victim/Offender Information Services Manager for the Arkansas Crime Information Center.

**FIRE
Safe**