Connect South Dakota: A Justice Information Sharing Success Story

Tammy Woodhams, Senior Staff Associate, National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA)

Justice information sharing is at the heart of everything we need to do to prevent terrorism, reduce crime, and improve the quality of justice in America. While many states are still challenged with turf issues, a lack of resources, and information sharing “silo’s,” the Connect South Dakota (Connect SD) justice information sharing program is changing the way law enforcement personnel in South Dakota do business. As a result, its “citizens, officers, and inmates are safer,” says Sheriff Mike Milstead, Minnehaha County Sheriff and Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA) representative.

ConnectSD greatly enhances an investigator’s ability to locate criminals and track suspect activity and behavior at the local level. In addition, by using national information-sharing standards, the program facilitates linking South Dakota to the critical National Data Exchange (N-DEx) project. The system can be used to create a data-sharing environment within any area, region, or state. It gives patrol officers, investigators, and intake officers equal access to critical information they need to better serve the public.

ConnectSD was developed to help both the large and small county sheriffs and law enforcement agencies throughout the state share information and track records in a comprehensive way. South Dakota covers 77,121 square miles, making it the 17th largest state, with a population of 825,000. South Dakota law enforcement services are provided by the State Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), State Highway Patrol, 65 county sheriffs, and 75 city police departments. Each agency has different levels of capacity and faces its own challenges based on resources, jurisdictional geographic area, and population. Minnehaha County, the largest county in the state by population with 180,000 people, covers 810 square miles.

1 Nationwide, 74% of state/local law enforcement agencies have 24 or fewer officers (BJS, 2007); in South Dakota, approximately 85% of the local law enforcement agencies have 20 or fewer officers.

The Minnehaha Sheriff’s Department is staffed by 250 employees. Perkins County has a population of 3,000 people and covers 3,000 square miles. The Perkins County Sheriff’s Department is staffed by Sheriff Kelly Serr and two deputies, and

NCJA, BJA, and JRSA Hold Joint Meeting on Evidence-Based Practices

Karen Maline, JRSA Director of Member Services

On January 8 and 9, the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) partnered to convene the Executive Session on Evidence-Based Policy and Practice. The meeting drew almost 100 attendees, including State Administering Agency (SAA) and Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) directors, and federal officials from the Office of Justice Programs and BJA. The agenda evolved from training and technical assistance provided by the BJA, NCJA, and JRSA following an initial focus group of SAAs on evidence-based programs in January 2009; a series of regional conferences in 2010; delivery of technical assistance to more than 20 states; and surveys of SAAs and SAC directors concerning evidence-based programs. The agenda also highlighted BJA’s priority of embedding evidence-based practices (EBPs) in all of its grant programs, and JRSA’s focus on using data to support EBPs and data-driven decision making. Finally, the meeting provided a chance to enhance the dialogue between the SAAs and SACs on the use of EBPs.

After opening remarks from BJA Director Denise O’Donnell and Jeanne Smith, Vice President of NCJA, as well as introductions by NCJA Executive Director
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uses a records management system developed by Sheriff Serr using Microsoft software. “We wanted to give Sheriff Serr, and others like him, a one-stop shop for law enforcement either on the street or at their desk,” said ConnectSD project manager Ross Uhrig.

ConnectSD eliminates the boundaries created by individual public safety software systems and shares data within the state, compiling:

- Incident and case reports
- Arrest reports
- Computer-aided dispatch calls
- Traffic citations
- Narratives
- Photos (Beginning in Phase II)
- Supplements, and
- Booking and incarceration data.

Prior to implementation, South Dakota was challenged with many issues, including:

- A variety of records management and jail management systems,
- Information silos, with important information unavailable to other agencies,
- An inability to effectively participate with evolving Information Sharing Environment (ISE) capabilities such as N-DEx and the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI),
- Inadequate criminal histories resulting in time-intensive investigative searches, and
- No security standard for personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information exchange, and storage.

Phase one of the ConnectSD initiative addressed the following goals:

- Share information across agencies regardless of disparate geographic location or current Records Management System/Jail Management System (RMS/JMS system) through ConnectSD hub,
- Gain participation in N-DEx and the NSI,
- Secure data with appropriate access controls,
- Protect citizens’ privacy/civil liberties,
- Implement low-cost solutions and use national standards,
- Improve investigative search capability, and
- Establish a statewide system while maintaining local control.

The last goal was considered the most important for the success of the project because it secured buy-in from local agencies. Bryan Gortmaker, the director of DCI and South Dakota’s Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), said one feature that was appealing to officers in local jurisdictions was that each agency using ConnectSD retains control over what information to include in the shared database. “They get to share their valued information statewide, so it gains in value, but they also still maintain ownership over those records,” he said. Sensitive data can be censored and flagged so they are not shared.

ConnectSD project manager Ross Uhrig added that another selling point at the local level was that the system uses Global Federated Identity and Privilege Management (GFIPM) technology for authenticating users, so officers do not need a separate login for the secure, web-based storehouse. “Using available standards and not trying to reinvent the wheel has been key to this software,” he said. “Developing a system to ensure a secure deployment would have taken additional time and resources we did not have. By using these standards, we solved our deployment before development began. Law enforcement personnel do not need to remember an additional user name or password.”

All data are transferred automatically, with no additional steps required by users. The system updates in real time based on intervals determined by each agency, keeping the database full of the most current Incident Arrest (IA) and Incarceration Booking (IB) data that conform to the national Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) field structure. By adhering to the N-DEx, local agency vendors for IA and IB IEPDs have the ability to develop their interfaces without requiring any additional information or customization for South Dakota-specific items. This makes participation with
President Announces Intent to Fill OJP Positions

President Obama announced his intention in February to nominate Karol V. Mason to serve as Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for the Office of Justice Programs. Ms. Mason is a partner at the law firm of Alston & Bird, LLP, where she practiced from 1983 to 2009. She served as a Deputy Associate Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice from 2009 to 2012, and from 1982 to 1983 she was a judicial law clerk for Judge John F. Grady of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Ms. Mason was a recipient of the U.S. Attorney General’s Distinguished Service Award in 2011 and the University of North Carolina General Alumni Association’s Distinguished Service Medal in 2010. She received an A.B. in mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. The Assistant Attorney General position is subject to Senate confirmation. If confirmed, Ms. Mason would succeed Laurie Robinson. Mary Lou Leary has served as Acting AAG since Ms. Robinson’s departure.

Robert Listenbee, Jr. has been tapped to serve in the long-vacant position of Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at the Office of Justice Programs. Mr. Listenbee is currently chief of the Juvenile Unit of the Defender Association of Philadelphia, and recently co-chaired Attorney General Eric Holder’s National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence. He is also a primary member of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, which is tasked with advising the president, Congress, and the OJJDP administrator on federal policies related to juvenile justice.

The administrator position at OJJDP has not been filled by a permanent appointee since J. Robert Flores stepped down in 2008. President George W. Bush appointed Jeff Slowikowski to serve as acting administrator in January 2009. He stayed on the job until January 2012, when he was replaced by then-deputy administrator of policy, Melodee Hanes. Ms. Hanes will remain with the agency in another role, said a source at OJJDP. Mr. Listenbee will be the first appointed administrator not to be confirmed by the Senate. The OJJDP job was stripped of the confirmation requirement in August when President Obama signed the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011, which removed confirmation requirements from scores of appointments that heretofore had required Senate approval.

New Corrections Chief Comes Onboard at BJS

Daniela Golinelli is the Chief of the Corrections Unit at the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Prior to joining BJS she was an assistant professor at the University of Southern California and more recently a Senior Statistician at RAND. While at RAND she worked on a variety of studies. Her contributions span several areas both substantively and methodologically. Within the randomized controlled trials research area she has designed randomization schemes and led analyses for several large, mental health randomized intervention studies. Within the research areas of homeless individuals and their personal networks she has designed the sampling plan and led analyses for three large studies on homeless women, men, and youth in Los Angeles that investigated the association between personal network characteristics and risky behaviors including substance use. Her methodological interests focus on sampling designs, analysis of survey data, propensity score methods, and Bayesian statistics. She holds a Ph.D. in statistics from the University of Washington.

Research, Policy, Practice – and Theory: The Role and Significance of Theoretical Thinking in the Formulation of Contemporary Drug Policy

Henry H. Brownstein, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, NORC at the University of Chicago

In this era of evidence-based policy and practice, the relationship between research, policy and practice is widely acknowledged and embraced by many, if not most, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. But however important that relationship may be to the quality of policy and practice at any or all levels, informing policy and practice with knowledge gained from the findings and conclusions of research is not enough unless the role and significance of theory are just as widely acknowledged and embraced.

Contemporary Drug Policy, published by Routledge in January 2013, focuses on drugs in our everyday lives and the ways in which we as individuals and as communities of people respond to them. It views drugs as part of our normal personal and social experience and considers which drugs, when drugs, and how drugs are or can be harmful to us and which, when, and how they are or can be beneficial to us. It does not propose particular answers or solutions, nor does it advocate for any particular policies or practices. Rather, the book primarily proposes questions. It advocates eschewing unfounded assumptions and instead asking more questions, and calls for the use of science to continue to search for reasonable and compelling answers and, just as important, the questions raised by those answers.

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ConnectSD and N-DEx either free or at least affordable for participating agencies. The use of Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) and RISSNET Single Sign On and user management also made an enormous impact on the scope of the project. ConnectSD was able to ensure a secure environment, use dual factor authentication, and access over 1,000 accounts created by South Dakota Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) through RISSNET. As a result, DCI was able to start developing user access within four hours of being introduced to the RISS implementation of GFIPM.

Use of the national data-sharing standards according to the Global privacy development template also ensures the protection of every citizen’s civil liberties, Sheriff Milstead explained: “South Dakota’s program will be a ‘best practice’ and something that can be duplicated in other jurisdictions.” Another product of ConnectSD is the capability for it to serve as a Records Management System (RMS) for agencies that don’t have an in-house system. This is the first goal for phase two for ConnectSD, with a second goal being submissions from other agencies, including the Department of Corrections and Parole. The hope is to eventually have real-time submission from the field to the Fusion Center.

Overcoming Challenges
Fortunately, South Dakota did not struggle with local buy-in as much as some would have anticipated. The greatest challenge faced was taking the standards and applying them to practical use. Zuercher Technologies, along with Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) providers (listed below), helped to implement standards in a way that met the goals of the project.

SAC Director Gortmaker indicates the project was made possible through the initial acquisition of a 2010 Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) cross-boundary information sharing grant. DCI created a governance board to oversee the project. They also received training and technical assistance from several national TTA providers, including Integrated Justice Information Systems (IJOIS) Institute, National Governors’ Association (NGA), National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), National Data Exchange (N- DEx), Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS), Global Justice Information Sharing Information Sharing Initiative (Global), Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI), and Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR).

During a recent webinar regarding ConnectSD, hosted by NCJA and the Justice Information Sharing Practitioners (JISP) Network, Patrick McCreary, Associate Deputy Director, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, shared three critical factors of success for justice information sharing initiatives: shared governance, use of open standards, and continuing support by having correct policy development implementation, specifically, privacy policies.

If you are working to advance justice information sharing and would like to access TTA to move forward in your state or jurisdiction, please contact Tammy Woodhams, Senior Staff Associate, at the National Criminal Justice Association (twoodhams@ncja.org).

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Cabell Cropper, the meeting began with a session on Challenges in Promoting Use of Data and Research in Criminal Justice Programs, in which Dr. Phelan Wyrick, Senior Advisor at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), discussed the evidence-based movement. Among the challenges to using evidence-based practices is being able to define what “evidence-based” means. He said you must be able to define the term in everyday language; it must mean the same thing to the researcher and the practitioner. He emphasized the importance of bringing social science into the picture because social science provides a level of objectivity that is influential to policy makers and executives. Although EBPs are still an innovation, they have become more accessible and have helped to discredit some popular but ineffective programs. He concluded by discussing OJP’s Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I), launched in 2009 with the goal of integrating evidence into justice programs, practices, and policy decisions. Two by-products of this effort are the OJP Diagnostic Center and CrimeSolutions.gov.

The next session was on Using Data to Inform Evidence-Based Decision Making: The New York Experience. Presented by New York SAC Director Terry Salo, this panel focused on Operation Impact, a program of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) that supports strategic crime-fighting and violence reduction initiatives in the 17 counties outside New York City that account for 80% of the crime upstate and on Long Island. This initiative provides participating law enforcement agencies with the information, tools, and resources necessary to implement a data-driven approach to policing. Ms. Salo discussed the data collection and analysis requirements the Impact counties must meet, as well as the data reporting requirements, including monthly shooting incident and victim reports, which help DCJS track trends. She also reported on the Results First Cost Benefit project, in which cost benefit is used to estimate the impact of criminal justice programs or sentencing changes on public safety. New York is among the states using this consistent, formal cost-benefit methodology to predict which programs will achieve the best results at lowest cost.

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On February 19, JRSA held the first in a series of training and technical assistance webinars on the use of administrative records. The webinar, designed to provide an overview of issues associated with the use of such records, was presented by Dr. Dennis Culhane, Professor of Social Policy at the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania and Co-Principal Investigator for the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy initiative.

Dr. Culhane began his presentation by defining administrative records as containing “data routinely gathered for operational or business purposes by public or private agencies.” These data, he emphasized, are not collected for research purposes, and thus are not as “clean” as typical research datasets.

Dr. Culhane noted that there often are a number of challenges to accessing administrative records. He identified four types of barriers to obtaining these records: legal (including issues related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA] for school records and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA] for health-related records); political (agencies may not want to share information for a variety of reasons, such as “turf” issues); data (technical issues and concerns about data quality issues); and technical (need specific technical expertise to understand and analyze the data).

There are also a number of potential data quality issues associated with the use of administrative records. Dr. Culhane noted problems related to data coverage, data completeness and accuracy, and challenges with linking records across data systems. Regarding the last issue, there are two basic methods for linking records: deterministic, which involves exact matches based on common identifiers, and probabilistic, which are likely matches based on factors such as name and date of birth.

Dr. Culhane provided an example of the use of administrative records from his own work, a study of outcomes of youth exiting dependent or delinquent care in Los Angeles county. The study looked at data from a number of local administrative records systems, including mental health, jail, probation, substance abuse treatment, and secondary and post-secondary education.

He also described the project on which he is currently co-Principal Investigator, Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy. This project is designed to identify best practices in integrated data systems, and works with a network of integrated data systems in four states and six large cities and counties. The project will allow for analysts to address a number of policy questions with multisite projects that make use of these integrated data systems.

The webinar, Issues in Using Administrative Records, can be viewed on JRSA’s Web site (http://www.jrsa.org/webinars/index.html). More information on the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy project can be found on the project Web site (www.aisp.upenn.edu). JRSA’s next webinar on administrative records, scheduled for April 11 at 2:00 p.m. (EDT), will feature presentations by the Illinois and Vermont SAC directors on their use of administrative records systems. 

Save the Date! 2013 National Forum on Criminal Justice
August 4-6

InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile, Chicago, Illinois

The 2013 National Forum on Criminal Justice will focus on Integrating Research, Policy and Technology to Improve Public Safety. The National Forum showcases programs, research, and technologies that help justice practitioners and decision makers in states, local communities, and tribal nations address pressing public safety issues. Last year 93 percent of attendees reported that they learned useful strategies and ideas that they could take home and implement immediately.

Along with the National Criminal Justice Association, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and IJIS, the Justice Research and Statistics Association will offer a track of sessions during the conference as well as several postconference training seminars on August 7.

Registration information is coming soon!
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She cautioned, though, that having a technical cost-benefit model is meaningless without targeting (determining exactly what type of offender the program works best for); quality assurance; and evaluation or annual outcome studies of recidivism or other expected program results.

Stan Orchowsky, JRSA’s Research Director, gave a short presentation on The Use of Research and Evidence-Based Practices by State Administering Agencies. He said that according to a JRSA survey of 43 SAA directors or their designees conducted in 2011, 20% of the SAs considered EBPs to be required by their agencies. Survey results indicated that a strong working relationship between the SAA and the SAC was important for implementing EBPs, and that it is important to designate funds for program evaluation. Barriers to implementation of EBPs included budget cuts, lack of free or easily accessible technical assistance for local subgrantees, lack of stakeholder buy-in, and lack of resources to ensure fidelity to the program model. Some of the presentations that followed addressed these four challenges.

Pennsylvania SAC Director Lee Ann Labecki discussed the work of the SAC in Setting a Direction for Evidence-Based Practice. Ms. Labecki said that much like New York, Pennsylvania has a large number of law enforcement agencies. The question is how do you get them to use data? One solution they devised was to create an EBP Toolbox with four components: 1) They used grant funds from the Bureau of Justice Statistics for the last three years to reconfigure their website and provide a data clearinghouse; 2) the offender population projections process was moved from the Department of Corrections back to the SAC and standardized, resulting in a more accurate forecast; 3) for counties that don’t have the capability to do sophisticated crime analysis, they created a Digital Dashboard that provides online access to analysis tools; and 4) they transformed the Electronic Grants Management System into a proactive performance measurement tool. Ms. Labecki noted that while she has a strong working relationship with the SAA and there is a firm commitment to EBPs, there are still challenges in the form of budget cuts, which translate into a lack of resources to implement effective evaluation and meet fidelity requirements, or to fully implement the research agenda.

SAC Director Phil Stevenson’s presentation, The Role of Statistical Analysis Centers in Supporting State Administering Agencies’ Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice and Policy, focused on how to turn challenges into opportunities. For example:

- **Budget cuts should be a motivator for using data and research to maximize the utility of limited resources; Arizona is committed to providing local governments with data.**
- **Lack of training and technical assistance:** In addition to NCJA and JRSA, each state has the ability to provide technical assistance. Dr. Stevenson suggested also cultivating local resources to assist subgrantees, or collaborating with other state organizations. In Arizona, for example, the SAC worked with the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup to develop a training and technical assistance initiative.
- **Lack of resources to ensure implementation fidelity:** If a grantee wants to replicate a successful program, require that they stick to the critical elements of the program, and then have them report on those elements.

The next presentation was about the Ohio Consortium of Crime Science (OCCS). Kharlton Moore, Executive Director of the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) and SAC Director Lisa Shoaf discussed the establishment of an academic consortium by OCJS to provide evidence-based solutions to the real-world problems faced by local criminal justice agencies. The first of its kind in the nation, the OCCS will bring together social science researchers under one resource to conduct research, disseminate knowledge, and foster relationships among practitioners, policy makers, and academics. The benefit of having a science consortium is that small law enforcement agencies will have access to the same crime analysis, research, and evaluation resources and opportunities as larger agencies.

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JRSA Website Features SAC Spotlight

As part of the recent redesign of JRSA’s website, staff developed the SAC Spotlight, a vehicle for highlighting the projects, publications, accomplishments, and staff of a single Statistical Analysis Center. The SAC Spotlight also describes the location of the SAC in state government, its relationship with other state agencies, and how it supports criminal and juvenile justice efforts in its state. By focusing on one SAC at a time, we hope to highlight the critical role they all play in analyzing justice information in their state and informing the development of sound public policy.

Each Spotlight will remain posted for one month to six weeks and then be moved to the Spotlight archive. Arizona was the first SAC to be featured, followed by West Virginia and Minnesota. If you have feedback about the SAC Spotlight, please let us know at cjinfo@jrsa.org.
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The Consortium will provide training, technical assistance, evaluation, and consulting services directly to local criminal justice agencies who seek assistance in solving crime and criminal justice problems, and create academic-practitioner partnerships. (More information on the establishment of the OCCS is in the JRSA Forum, Vol. 30, No. 3.) The Consortium also will serve as a model for other states, help bridge the gap between academics and practitioners, promote evidence-based practices, help match expertise with need, and help solve local crime problems.

While the previous presentations focused on SAC efforts to build capacity within the state for evidence-based practice, Norb Federspiel, Executive Director of the West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services (DJCS), discussed his efforts to establish a SAC with the capacity to do research and evaluation within the agency. He knew he had to hire a director who encouraged EBPs and could build the capacity of the agency from within to be able to do the strategic planning that the Byrne Grant program mandates. As part of this effort, DCJS recently designed a model program that assigns a SAC staff member to each grant program funded by the SAA to ensure performance measurement. To support this, the SAC held a meeting for grantees in the fall of 2012 with workshops on performance measurement, sustainability, and accountability. To maintain this model, Mr. Federspiel said he will need the political support of the governor and Secretary of the Department of Public Safety.

West Virginia SAC Director Stephen Haas continued the presentation by explaining how he changed DJCS from a granting agency to a true planning agency:

1. Built intellectual capital and capacity—the SAC now has eight full-time-equivalent employees (five with master’s degrees and two with Ph.D.s). When he was hired there was one person with a bachelor’s degree.
2. Broke from old hiring habits and traditions—the SAC scrapped its classification system and developed a research specialist classification system and revised its recruiting practices as well. They now recruit nationally.
3. Embedded science and research into everything they did—they restructured and reorganized. There is now a SAC unit and the new Justice Center for Evidence-Based Practice, which implements evidence-based programs in the field.

He concluded by saying that bringing scientific research and evaluation into all practices begins before a solicitation is written, and then has to continue all the way through the grant process.

After a day of discussions about different states’ evidence-based programs and practices, Roger Pryzybylski, Founder and Consultant of RKC Group, gave a presentation on planning and implementation issues that must be considered when using the evidence-based approach. First he recommended two publications: 1) Effective Recidivism Reduction and Risk-Focused Prevention Programs: A Compendium of Evidence-Based Options for Preventing New and Persistent Criminal Behavior, and provide the necessary data. He explained three approaches to becoming more evidence-based: implement “certified” (brand-name) model programs; use generic interventions (e.g., drug courts, mentoring programs); or use practice guidelines derived from science.

Mr. Pryzybylski noted that implementation is a process, not a single event, and discussed four steps of the implementation process: Exploration (ends with a decision on whether or not to move forward), Installation (training, acquisition of equipment), Initial Implementation (initial change in practice; forces at play may include resistance or push-back), and Full Implementation (takes two to four years to achieve; occurs when a high number of practitioners proceed with a high degree of program fidelity). Finally, he said implementation must be supported at higher levels of leadership to overcome barriers, and programs that don’t work must be eliminated.

The final session of the meeting included presentations on cost-benefit analysis from Tina Chiu, Director of Technical Assistance at the Vera Institute, and John Roman, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute. Ms. Chiu discussed the National Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank for Criminal Justice, a resource administered by Vera and funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to broaden and deepen the understanding and use of cost-benefit analysis in criminal justice.

Mr. Roman defined cost-benefit analysis as an empirical approach designed to measure the economic impact of government programs, and discussed different ways of analyzing cost. The meeting ended with a discussion among attendees of the challenge of embedding EBP in grant-funded programs.

While the explicit focus of *Contemporary Drug Policy* is on drugs and drug policy, more broadly the book is about the relationship between research and policy and how that relationship can be guided by the relationship in science between theory and research. Nothing in reality is ever as orderly or organized as we like to think it is, but theory can serve as a guide for the progression of science by offering conceptualizations that allow us to believe we can explain the inexplicable or know the unknowable. Our knowledge and understanding of anything are never complete, but through theory we can fill the gaps in our knowledge, and make sense of something in the world around us. We can use the explanations from theory to hypothesize about how things might fit together or what they might mean. We can pose new, important, and interesting questions for research toward new and better knowledge, understanding, and explanation—and thereby raise even more interesting questions.

Given the significance of theory in research, which particular theory is used to guide a scientific investigation makes a difference in whether and how that scientific investigation informs policy. In *Contemporary Drug Policy* I argue that the theories we have used throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century to guide our research and derive hypotheses to fill the gaps in our knowledge about drugs in society have perhaps not led us in the most productive policy direction.

Consider drug policy as it relates to the legitimacy or legality of some drugs but not others, or particular drugs used or distributed in particular circumstances, or different categories of people using or distributing different drugs. Most of our research on the appropriate place for drugs in society has been guided by mainstream criminological theories rather than critical criminological theories. That has led us in a direction emphasizing control and management of drugs, drug users, and manufacturers, and distribution of drugs being classified as illegal or at least unacceptable for all or some people in all or some circumstances.

What is the difference? Simply stated, mainstream criminological theories are grounded in classical, neoclassical, and positivist thought, so begin with the philosophical assumption that human behavior is a consequence of independent social, cultural, and biological forces and go on to explain crime and justice in terms of phenomena and processes like social order and disorder, socialization, social control, and anomie and social strain. Critical criminological theories are grounded in a Marxist paradigm, so begin with the philosophical assumption that humans have the capacity to create themselves and others while being the product of their social, cultural, and physical world and go on to explain crime and justice in terms of the asymmetrical distribution in society not only of material resources but also things like power, status, and even personal and community well-being. Therefore, notions and conceptualizations based on critical criminological theories might lead us instead to studies about the possibility of policies that seek peace rather than war and might raise policy-relevant questions about things like the impact of policies that are grounded in values related to differences in class, ethnicity, race, and gender. This is not to suggest that critical criminological theories should replace mainstream criminological theory in guiding all the research that informs drug policy. But if we do follow the lead of critical theory it will raise new, different, and important questions that have not been raised or addressed before and just might move us a step closer to being able to make more informed, realistic, productive, nonhazardous, just, and humane drug policy.

*Contemporary Drug Policy* by Dr. Henry H. Brownstein focuses on the use of drugs in our lives and how we respond to them. Whereas drug policy typically centers on the problems of illicit drugs or licit drugs used in illicit ways or circumstances, the book instead considers the wide variety of substances we call drugs as a normal part of our personal and social experience and asks how and when drugs benefit us as well as how and when they are harmful.

“. . . if we do follow the lead of critical theory it will raise new, different, and important questions that have not been raised or addressed before and just might move us a step closer to being able to make more informed, realistic, productive, nonhazardous, just, and humane drug policy.”

Different from other books on drug policy, Contemporary Drug Policy does not offer answers or solutions. Rather it shows how critical criminological theories can lead scientific research in new directions supportive of policies that offer both solutions to problems that are found to be related to drugs and an appreciation for the benefits that drugs can bring to people and society. ☺️
Arizona SAC Director Takes on New Roles with SEARCH and Global

Arizona SAC Director, and current JRSA President, Phillip Stevenson was appointed by SEARCH Chairman Francis X. Aumand, III as an At-Large representative to the SEARCH Membership Group. This group is responsible for guiding the work of SEARCH staff as they help local, state, and tribal public safety agencies solve their information management and information sharing challenges.

“The membership group consists of one gubernatorial appointee from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. At-large members help broaden SEARCH’s perspective by offering a broader range of opinions and incorporating viewpoints from other components of the criminal justice system, such as the judiciary, corrections, academia and research, and local government,” explained Dr. Stevenson. “Being an at-large member of the SEARCH membership group will allow me to share the perspective and experiences of my fellow SAC directors and use that information to improve SEARCH’s service to public safety agencies nationwide.”

“I am pleased Dr. Stevenson has agreed to join the SEARCH Membership as an At-Large appointee,” said Chairman Aumand. “With his experience and knowledge of evidence-based practices in the justice system, he will bring a beneficial perspective to the deliberations of the Membership.” The appointment was made January 1, 2013, and will run through December 31, 2014.

Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative

In addition to his current roles as Vice Chair of the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative Privacy and Information Quality Working Group and as a member of the Global Standards Council, Dr. Stevenson also was recently appointed Vice Chairman of the Global Business Solutions Council (GBSC), a new cross-functional, multidisciplinary group of local, state, tribal, and federal justice representatives whose joint mission is to identify priority justice information sharing business problems and recommend solutions for the field. The GBSC will identify critical information sharing challenges in the justice community and develop associated recommendations and products that can be implemented in the field. The GBSC’s identification of these priorities will be achieved through a systematic process that fully considers the interconnected factors of changing political and economic environments, the evolving field of technology, and the dynamic demands on the justice and public safety enterprise. These priorities may include such issues as human trafficking, gun violence, reentry, mental health, or others as the council determines.

Arizona Youth Survey Reveals Levels of Violence and Drug Use Among Youth

The Arizona SAC, the research arm of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, took part in the recent effort to conduct and compile results from the 2012 Arizona Youth Survey. The survey sample included more than 60,000 students from 349 schools across Arizona’s 15 counties. The purpose of the survey is to assess health risk behavior and measure the prevalence of substance abuse behavior—including use of alcohol, tobacco, and other dangerous drugs—among Arizona 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students. The survey also includes questions concerning other risky behavior such as bullying, violence, and gambling.

Survey results show that Arizona students continue to experience and/or participate in frequent incidences of violence, bullying, and cyber-bullying. In addition, more than one third of Arizona youth reported engaging in some type of substance use in the previous 30 days.

Findings are presented by county (along with comparisons to the results for the state) and for the state as a whole. A separate report, the 2012 Arizona Youth Survey State of Arizona Summary Report, presents a summary of findings from the 2012 survey, along with comparisons of the findings to past years’ results.

FDLE Commissioner’s Award Goes to Cindy Durrett

Cindy Durrett, a member of the Florida Statistical Analysis Center, was recognized as the 2012 Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner’s Award winner. This award gives special recognition to an unsung hero in the Department whose performance is outstanding, but who may not have a high profile. As the 2012 Commissioner’s Award winner, Mrs. Durrett was presented a resolution by Florida’s Governor and Cabinet. Mrs. Durrett supports several of FDLE’s program areas through data analysis, including examining a variety of data sources to enhance and ensure the quality of Florida’s criminal history records.
Minnesota

MNSAC Releases Publications on DMC and Sexually Exploited Youth

Dana Swayze and Danette Buskovick of the Minnesota SAC (housed in the Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs) recently completed On The Level: Disproportionate Minority Contact in Minnesota’s Juvenile Justice System. This report provides detailed information regarding the phenomenon of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in Minnesota’s juvenile justice system. Included in the report is a description of how racial disparities are calculated, how disparity data are to be interpreted, and how they inform justice system practices. This report also describes factors known to contribute to racial disparities in the justice system as well as recommended aspects of DMC reduction strategies. In closing, the report summarizes Minnesota’s response to evidence of racial disparities in the system and makes suggestions for strengthening the state response to DMC. It is the hope that data such as these will ideally incite communities, practitioners, and policy makers to collect additional information, identify underlying causes of disparity, and dedicate resources to DMC abatement.

The SAC also just published No Wrong Door: A Comprehensive Approach to Providing Safe Harbor for Minnesota’s Sexually Exploited Youth. This model is designed to ensure that youth who are at risk for sexual exploitation are properly identified, receive effective services, and are housed safely. Over the past year, the MNSAC led a group of approximately 65 stakeholders to develop this model in response to the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth legislation that was passed in 2011. Several other states have also passed Safe Harbor legislation, but Minnesota is the first state to have such a staged, comprehensive response to sex trafficking.

Oregon

Oregon SAC Conducts Evaluations on Earned Time Laws and on Effectiveness of Reentry Centers

Earned time policies in the state of Oregon have changed multiple times in recent history, affecting how inmate populations accrue time credits that can be used for early release. At the request of the state legislature, the Oregon SAC is examining changes in the earned time laws and evaluating how those changes affect the recidivism rate among various offender groups. In one case, for example, changes to the law applied retroactively to current inmates. In another case changes created a quasi-experimental setting wherein some inmates were eligible for extra earned time before a specified date, while others after that date were not eligible. Findings to date indicate that differences in earned time accrual do not affect recidivism rates for release cohorts within the study period. The evaluation is also using accelerated failure time models to determine if there are differences in survival properties across distinct earned time groups. Release of the final report is expected within the next few months.

The SAC recently completed a preliminary evaluation of three reentry centers in Oregon. The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission provided a Reentry Resource Center Grant to Multnomah, Lane, and Klamath Counties starting January 1, 2010. The grant program goals included reducing new crimes and increasing employment and stable housing for offenders released from prison. The centers provide assessment and planning, service coordination, employment and housing assistance, and financial assistance such as bus passes, identification services, or assistance in applying for benefits. This evaluation provides preliminary outcome results of subsequent arrests and charges for reentry center participants and a matched pair control group. For all participants receiving services from the centers, no significant difference was found from the control group in subsequent arrests or charges. These results could be expected because a large number of the participants receive minimal services, such as a referral or employment search assistance. An additional evaluation was conducted for those participants that receive the highest level of services, which includes an action plan and full engagement in available services. For this participant group a marginally significant difference was found in the statutory arrest rate as compared to the control group. The treatment group showed a 25% drop in the arrest rate for statutory crimes. There was no significant difference in the total arrest rate. For new charges, the treatment group showed a 31% drop for the overall charge rate, which was statistically significant.

SAC staff have also been busy responding to legislative data requests now that the legislature is in session. Economist Steven Carter prepares fiscal impact estimates for criminal justice-related bills, and SAC Director Kelly Officer responds to other data requests mostly focusing on justice reinvestment proposals.

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Vermont

Vermont SAC Completes Evaluations of Three County Programs

Bennington County Integrated Domestic Violence Docket Project: Process Evaluation

The Bennington County Integrated Domestic Violence Docket (IDVD) Project was initiated in September 2007 as a special docket within the Bennington County Criminal/Family Division Courts. The goal of the IDVD Project was to provide an immediate response to domestic violence events by coordinating Family and Criminal Division cases. Dedicated to the idea of One Family, One Judge, the IDVD Project was designed to allow a single judge, one day each week, to have immediate access to all relevant information regardless of the traditional docket and to gather all appropriate players at the table regardless of any traditionally limited roles. The IDVD Project focused on: 1) protection and safety for victims and their children as well as other family members; 2) providing immediate access to community services and resources for victims, their children, and offenders to help overcome the impact of prior domestic abuse and prevent future abuse; and 3) providing an immediate and effective response to noncompliance with court orders by offenders.

The IDVD Project was up and running from 2007 through early 2010. For varying reasons, the project disintegrated from its original inception, and the Vermont SAC conducted a process evaluation to determine “what worked” and whether there were process issues that contributed to the disintegration of the docket. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with team members, and themes that fell into two broad categories emerged: themes that were related to the outcomes and themes that arose organically during the interview process. The first part of this report addresses the implementation and outcomes of the stated goals of the project. The second part addresses the organic themes that illustrate issues that were important to team members outside of the objectives of the IDVD Project but are related to the ability to replicate the project elsewhere.

Washington County Treatment Court: Outcome Evaluation

In 2002, the Vermont Legislature established a pilot project to create drug court initiatives and begin implementing drug courts in three Vermont counties – Rutland, Chittenden, and Bennington. Since the establishment of these drug courts, and the initial indications of their efficacy, additional Vermont counties have started drug court programs. The Washington County Treatment Court began official operation in September 2006. It was established with the purpose of combating drug crimes, not only drug possession but drug-related crimes, both misdemeanors and felonies, such as retail theft, burglaries, and grand larceny. Offenders identified as drug-addicted are referred to the court by law enforcement, probation officers, and attorneys and put into a treatment program whose goal is to reduce drug dependency and improve the quality of life for offenders and their families. In most cases, after their successful completion of drug court, the original charges are dismissed or reduced. The benefits to society include reduced recidivism by the drug court participants, leading to increased public safety and reduced costs to taxpayers. This report provides the results of an outcome evaluation conducted by the Vermont SAC to determine the extent to which the Washington Treatment Court reduced recidivism among program participants.

Chittenden County Mental Health Court: Outcome Evaluation

The Chittenden County Mental Health Court (CMHC) began operation in January 2003. It is a program for adults who have committed a crime and are having difficulty with issues related to severe and persistent mental illness but are deemed competent to stand trial. These mental illnesses could include schizophrenia, paranoia, clinical depression, and border-line personality disorders. The CMHC accepts participants with any mental health diagnoses, including personality disorders and intellectual disabilities, but the majority of participants also have a co-occurring substance use condition as well. Typically their offenses are crimes such as disorderly conduct, unlawful trespass, drug possession, burglary, and retail theft. Occasionally, the court will hear felonies, such as arson, DWI, and assault, though all cases must first be approved by the State’s Attorney’s office. This report contains the results of an outcome evaluation conducted by the Vermont SAC to determine the extent to which the CMHC reduced recidivism among program participants.

See SAC News page 12

Justice Research and Policy
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Coming Soon!
JRP’s Special Issue on Evidence-Based Practice in Community Corrections

Guest Editor Dr. Stephen M. Haas

The articles in this special issue center on various aspects of implementation/fidelity and contemporary modes of service delivery.

Expected publication date is April/May 2013.

JRP is published by the Justice Research and Statistics Association.
SAC NEWS, continued

West Virginia

SAC Updates Prison Population Forecast and Announces Changes to Research Staff

The WVSAC recently released the West Virginia Correctional Population Forecast, 2012-2022. This report continues the biennial updating of prison population projections for the state. It describes the current correctional population and provides policy makers with a 10-year correctional population forecast.

The SAC also welcomed Bridget J. Connolly onboard as a Research Analyst. She holds a B.A. in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and an M.S. in criminal justice, concentration in law enforcement and crime prevention, from the University of Cincinnati. She most recently was employed as a research assistant with the University of Cincinnati’s Corrections Institute (UCCI), where she primarily worked on a statewide prison program evaluation relating to evidence-based practices. Ms. Connolly will help fulfill the mission of the Justice Center for Evidence-Based Practice, along with various quality assurance activities associated with the statewide implementation of the LS/CMI and other evidence-based practices. She has begun work on the construction of a “Global Correctional Program Assessment Inventory,” which will offer multiple measures of program quality, including observations, offender surveys, and official quality assurance data.

Simon Bauer-Leffler has left the Office of Research and Strategic Planning. All inquiries regarding Dr. Bauer-Leffler’s work may be directed to Dr. Stephen M. Haas.

President Signs Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 was signed into law by President Obama on March 7 after being passed in the House on March 4. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was originally passed into law in 1994 to enhance the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women. The bill, which was passed by the Senate in the last Congress but stalled in the House, included several provisions that became controversial during the run-up to the 2012 elections, including an expansion of services for immigrant victims of sexual violence, clarification on eligibility of services and training to victims regardless of sexual preference, and expansion of the authority of tribal courts over non-tribal defendants in limited circumstances.

The bill reintroduced this year in the Senate also includes the Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Registry Act, or SAFER Act, which authorizes states and local governments to use a certain portion of their Debbie Smith Act funding to conduct one-year audits of the untested sexual assault evidence in their possession. States or local governments choosing to use their Debbie Smith funding for this purpose will be required to report certain information about their backlog in a manner accessible to the public. The Senate approved the current bill in mid-February.