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Minnesota Invited to Adopt Justice Counts Data Collection/Reporting Model

Justice Counts is a national coalition of state and local leaders working to make criminal justice data more accessible through the development of common reporting metrics that could be implemented across all states. The initiative envisions creating a national dashboard of criminal justice information that would inform policy maker decisions.

Staff from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center (part of the U.S. Dept. of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs’ Bureau of Justice Assistance) provided a program overview to Advisory Group members.

Justice Counts developed a set of metrics in the areas of law enforcement, prosecution, defense, pre-trial/courts, jails, prisons and community supervision – data points that could be collected across all states. The idea is to identify the data that exists in disparate systems, as well as gaps in communicating that data, and then provide tools to states to fill those gaps and populate the dashboard.

The initiative is currently working to promote an understanding of Justice Counts and to ultimately promote its voluntary adoption by all 50 states.

Minnesota Crime Data Explorer Providing Timely Access to Detailed Crime Information

The years of waiting for the annual Uniform Crime Report to understand the crime situation in your community is over. As Advisory Group members saw in a demonstration from BCA Business Intelligence Engineer Darren Mitchell, the Minnesota Crime Data Explorer (MN CDE) now offers the public timely access to detailed Minnesota crime information.

Several key changes make MN CDE a dramatically improved tool over past Uniform Crime Reports:

- Minnesota’s transition to NIBRS incident-based reporting in 2021 allows for significantly more detailed information to be reported than was possible under the prior summary-format reporting.
- New data is published on a monthly basis and updates to existing data are published in real time.
- As more data is added to the system in the coming years, MN CDE will make it much easier for the public to identify and visualize data trends. Data looking backward would not allow apples-to-apples comparisons as NIBRS tallies certain data in different ways.

During the discussion that followed the presentation, Dana Gotz explained that the purpose of MN CDE is different from the Dept. of Public Safety’s (DPS) currently unstaffed Statistical Analysis Center (in the DPS Office of Justice Programs). The BCA’s role with MN CDE is to collect, maintain and provide the data, while the Statistical Analysis Center analyzes data.
Advisory Group to Recommend a Name Change

Following a brief discussion members reached a consensus: the name Criminal and Juvenile Justice Information Advisory Group isn’t working. The name is too long – with the potential to grow longer as responsibilities to the BCA are added – and there has long been confusion about whether the group works solely on juvenile-related criminal justice issues.

The Advisory Group voted unanimously to recommend that the legislature drop the phrase and juvenile from the group’s name. This phrase wasn’t a part of the original Policy Group/Task Force name, but was added a few years in because juvenile incidents aren’t considered criminal. But that move created the confusion that exists today. The BCA drafted a letter, sent May 16, from the Advisory Group to the legislature requesting an official name change to Criminal and Juvenile Justice Advisory Group in statute.

Further branding discussions will take place once the legislature decides on the group’s role providing public oversight of the BCA.

Open seats on the Advisory Group

There are 11 open seats on the Advisory Group, and while a quorum is based on filled positions, open positions create a gap in important voices and perspectives in Advisory Group discussions. The open positions are:

- Commissioner of Corrections or designee
- One member of the Judicial Branch appointed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court (two of three seats are filled)
- Commissioner of Administration or designee
- Two members appointed by the Minnesota Sheriffs Association, at least one of whom must be a sheriff
- Two members appointed by the Minnesota League of Cities representing the interests of city attorneys, at least one of whom must be a city attorney
- One probation officer appointed by the Commissioner of Corrections in consultation with the president of the Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers (MACPO) (one of two seats is filled)
- One member appointed by the Minnesota Association of Counties (one of two seats is filled)
- One member of the Senate appointed by the majority leader of the Senate
- One member appointed by the attorney general

The Advisory Group has reached out to the different organizations about filling these spots and continues to urge members and interested parties to look for ways to fill these seats.

Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee Update

The Advisory Group Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion determined that it would wait until the legislature decides on the group’s future focus before beginning outreach to diversity councils. These organizations, which focus on historically oppressed social identities, will be asked whether they would like to provide a presentation to the Advisory Group about criminal justice topics relevant to their organizations and the populations they serve.

- Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
- Minnesota Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

Data Practices Subcommittee Develops Cheat Sheet for Probation Data

The Data Practices subcommittee developed a cheat sheet for probation entities to use as they determine whether data is allowed to be released to the public. Subcommittee members, who are primarily probation personnel, will distribute the sheet to Minnesota professional associations involved with corrections along with a caution that entities should consult with their own legal counsel about what they should share.

Subcommittee members encouraged other Advisory Group members with law enforcement data experience to develop a parallel document related to law enforcement data classifications.

Note: The information in this publication is an unofficial summary of activity. It should not be considered official meeting minutes or an official program status report. Information subject to change.