

## Case Management: Understanding Case Status and Disposition

Case management is defined as "The combined business processes required to ensure the timely and correct management of the status and disposition of criminal investigations and supporting records as they progress through the criminal justice system."

The term "Case" is a generalized term representing a police report, particularly one which is being or may be investigated.

The Case Status field reflects the status of a case at any given point in time. However, some systems call this field "disposition".

The Disposition field (may have a different name/label in your system) reflects the final status or outcome of the case, including how cases involving arrests are finalized in the judicial system (was the defendant sentenced, found innocent, not prosecuted, plea bargained). Knowing the final disposition of a defendant's case is what helps determine if case records can be destroyed per retention schedules. Cases which have met retention schedule periods but are still pending in court should not be destroyed.

Proper case management procedure requires internal checks and balances (quality control) to ensure the Status and Disposition are correct throughout the course of an investigation, as well as having the correct options to choose from in these fields in a records management system.

Any time reports (cases, supplements, follow-ups) are written, it must be submitted to a supervisor for review and approval, and to Records for a second review and approval to ensure compliance with NIBRS requirements and to ensure the proper status and disposition is reflected in the case as the investigation progresses.

The accuracy of crime statistics/NIBRS data is based upon what is reflected in the Status and Disposition fields. A NIBRS reportable offense may or may not be counted depending on the status. If the case is "Unfounded" it is not counted. If it is cleared by exceptional means, the Disposition describes why.

It is important to remember there are situations when a case is solved (suspect has been identified and is known to have committed the crime) but cannot be charged/arrested due to extenuating circumstances. This is known as an Exceptional Clearance status. The Disposition in these situations should reflect why the case is Exceptionally Cleared (offender died prior to arrest or could not be taken into custody for some other reason).

Furthermore, the NIBRS program has specific criteria that must be met in order to change a case to Exceptionally Cleared, including requiring the agency to know the location of the suspect at any given time. If the location of the suspect is not known, then he/she is not able to be arrested. Because an Exceptional Clearance by definition involves a situation in which the suspect is known **and otherwise could be arrested**, but cannot be due to extenuating circumstances, an agency cannot claim an Exceptional Clearance when the suspect's whereabouts is unknown.

For this reason, it is possible for the status of an "Investigation" to internally reflect as cleared in the Case Management/Investigations module/system, because the crime was in fact solved, but the Case status indicates "closed" (not Exceptionally Cleared) because the suspect could not be located.

STATUS AND DISPOSITION LIST

<p><b>CASE STATUS</b> (The main case status in the incident/offense module)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Closed</li> <li>• Cleared by Arrest</li> <li>• Cleared by Exception</li> <li>• Unfounded</li> </ul>
<p><b>DISPOSITIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inactive</li> <li>• Pending Investigation</li> <li>• Warrant Issued</li> <li>• Leads Exhausted</li> <li>• Pending Adjudication</li> <li>• Sentenced</li> <li>• Prosecution Declined</li> <li>• Pending Appeal</li> <li>• Offender Died</li> <li>• In-custody- Other Jurisdiction</li> <li>• Vic/Wit Refused to Prosecute (note: suspect must be identified)</li> <li>• Juvenile- Released At Scene</li> <li>• Referred to Other Jurisdiction</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUPPLEMENT STATUS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Closed</li> <li>• Referred to Other Jurisdiction</li> </ul>
<p><b>FOLLOW-UP STATUS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further follow-up needed</li> <li>• No further follow-up needed</li> <li>• Referred to Other Jurisdiction</li> </ul>
<p><b>INVESTIGATION/CASE MANAGEMENT MODULE STATUS</b> (reflects the status of the investigation itself, not the case/report)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Closed</li> <li>• Cleared by Arrest</li> <li>• Cleared by Exception</li> <li>• Unfounded</li> </ul>

DISPOSITION	STATUS				
	OPEN	CLOSED	CLEARED BY ARREST	CLEARED BY EXCEPTION <sup>1</sup>	UNFOUNDED
Inactive		✓			✓
Pending Investigation	✓				
Warrant Issued	✓	✓			
Pending Adjudication			✓		
Sentenced			✓		
Prosecution Declined		✓	✓	✓	
Pending Appeal			✓		
Offender Died				✓	
In-custody Other Jurisdiction				✓	
Vic/Wit Refused To Cooperate		✓		✓	
Juvenile- Released At Scene		✓	✓	✓	
Referred To Other Jurisdiction		✓			✓

**IMPORTANT**

**Remember, it is very important to confirm how your RMS functions when it comes to Status and Disposition. Each system operates differently and may be configured differently. Research your vendor’s system documentation, your system settings, and/or contact support for assistance.**

Now that you understand the “how” and the “process”, reconcile these procedures with your current system!

<sup>1</sup> Can only be selected when the suspect has been identified, their location is known, probable cause exists for their arrest, and there is some reason beyond your control which prevents making the arrest.