POLICE +
RECORDS +
TECHNOLOGY +
GOVERNANCE =
SUCCESS

An inside guide to doing it right.

PRI

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OVERVIEW

The convergence of technology and law enforcement records management has been met with some degree of obstinance; an all too often maintenance of archaic practices, evident in the many agencies that to this day print and create paper case files, require wet ink signatures on documents, and drive records to the prosecutor's office.

To ensure data accuracy, timeliness and the efficient delivery of services to both internal and external stakeholders, our officers and our citizens, police agencies must maximize the capabilities of their systems by creating and managing records in the most direct manner possible – electronically without printing out a copy to send to Records or the Court (CJIS compliance can be met with today's file sharing technologies). Data-entry, the keying-in of information created by someone else, is also not a cost-effective, efficient or proper way of writing reports.

POLICE RECORDS & DATA

To provide the efficient delivery of accurate, error-free and timely records and data, law enforcement must embrace the elimination of outdated information management approaches and recognize that police records operations are central to today's data-driven policing.

Too much technology is another common problem. The layering of system upon system, requiring staff to query multiple applications to find something is a real problem, the result of no strategic plan, not conducting a needs assessment, or seeing the big picture. For example, the attempt to seamlessly integrate police RMS with document management systems and third-party report writing applications often results in the public release of a version of a report which is different than the copy of record (and the one used in court).

Today we shop, bank and travel completely paperless. We can make a purchase online or in a store without ever signing or copying a piece of paper. The world's finances, including your bank account and the money within, are maintained in a virtual world, on a computer somewhere "in the cloud". We can take a picture of a check with our phone and deposit that check into our bank account, electronically. We can board a flight with a ticket that is on our phone. We sign for packages on a tablet. Credit card companies no longer require signatures.

It is time for public safety to embrace digital transformation; the process of building a culture, business processes and technology systems that fundamentally enable the entire agency to operate in a nimble, efficient and technologically advanced manner; to solve problems quickly and provide value to citizens and employees through digital experiences and tools; to eliminate redundant and costly inefficiencies. Nonetheless, be sure to first read your state's Uniform Electronic Transactions Act to ensure compliance.

PRI is a company founded and operated by professionals who come from law enforcement with a sincere desire to advance the cause of public safety by ensuring the delivery of accurate, timely and efficient management of agency records and data through the utilization of technology and effective business processes. We are here to help you get there.

Stay Current

When is the last time your agency has purged records (complied with state retention schedules)? Are your officers familiar with the UCR Time and Place Rule? Are you? Is your agency prepared for NIBRS? Do you know about digital transformation? Are you still signing records with a pen? Using a fax machine?

Agency-wide compliance is the challenge. As the spokes on a wheel operate together, so too must the various components of an agency's information management program. Planning, training and execution is the key.

The **policerecordsmanagement.com** website has various resources including articles, industry news, training and consulting services for law enforcement.

The Records Room Newsletter is a monthly police records and technology brief containing training announcements, legal updates and other valuable news to keep you in the loop. Subscription is free; sign up at policerecordsmanagement.com.

Other Resources

PRI training courses are state-specific and include instruction in each state's legal requirements. As you continue throughout your career, or if you are new to police records, research your state's archives, attorney general, and UCR program websites regularly to monitor updates. This is where your retention schedules, legal opinions and records management guides can be located. Review your state's Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA), the law that allows electronic records and signatures.

Links

www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr

www.theiacp.org/tech-conference

www.clears.org

www.azlerma.org

www.tlera.org

www.lermainc.org

www.lermi.org

www.leirawa.org

CRIME DATA

Why Law Enforcement is Failing at Accuracy

At the center of the law enforcement profession is the proper reporting of crime. Doctors report medical data, schools report student data and police report crime data. Unfortunately, law enforcement misses the mark when it comes to this most fundamental task.

The number of agencies unaware of what case management really is, as it relates to crime data, what exceptional clearances are, and the proper way of writing/reporting crimes is quite shocking. We are amazed at how many do not follow standard case management and case assignment procedure and therefore aren't sure which cases are closed, which are cleared, which are unfounded and thus, have very inaccurate crime stats.

Many agencies are defensive of their homegrown investigations/case management systems despite the inefficiencies they create on the overall process, and are unaware of basic UCR reporting rules such as the Time and Place rule.

PRI has trained and consulted with thousands of criminal justice agencies since 2008 and can attest to the fact the depth of this problem is profound. If you read this article, take it to heart and implement what it says, your agency can be assured that it's doing things right. These are the standard UCR crime reporting rules. They exist for good reason.

Crime reporting is a process. Producing accurate UCR/NIBRS data is a process. It requires so much more than just ensuring the "numbers" add up. Your numbers may appear accurate when they really aren't. Just because the UCR error-check/validation function doesn't return any errors doesn't mean everything is right. How officers classify, report and clear crimes is the most important part of the process and your RMS has no idea when what they write is incorrect — it only indicates there is a UCR error when something is missing or not reconciling correctly.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF "CASE MANAGEMENT" IN LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Case management in the Records Unit means the proper management of case statuses and dispositions, and proper statuses of people, property and vehicles (stolen, missing, impounded, recovered, etc.) It means making sure the incident report status correctly reflects what UCR says it should be and the status of all items are properly reflected in the report.

Case management to your officers/detectives means cases assigned to them are investigated, managed and closed out properly and in a timely manner. Victims, witnesses and suspects have all been contacted, the investigation is proceeding efficiently and supplements are being written as appropriate.

The procedures described herein should be incorporated into your report writing manual and/or your records management, investigations or UCR policy. They need to become part of the fabric of your agency. Every report should be reviewed by a designated person responsible for determining which cases get assigned for follow-up investigation. This includes suspicious incidents and other noncriminal reports. Everything. Reports are sometimes titled incorrectly and do not get assigned when they should be. Sometimes suspicious incidents or other seemingly unimportant reports get overlooked and lead to real consequences. Missing persons cases can go completely unnoticed because they were titled wrong. Imagine a missing person ending up being a dead person because a police investigation wasn't initiated. Not good.

> ## ACCURATE, ERROR-FREE, TIMELY DATA
> A message should be sent from the top that officers and supervisors will be held accountable to the timely and proper submission of reports.

Likewise, someone (usually in Records) should be assigned the task of checking daily that reports have been submitted on time, changed to the appropriate status immediately upon a supplement or arrest being submitted, and that incidents, arrests and supplements are all reconciled. Sounds pretty basic, right? Not so fast. We see agencies neglecting to do this on a regular basis, leading to either under-reported or over-reported crime. One agency we worked with had been over-reporting crime by 20% and had been ranked the most violent city in the state. Why do these failures occur?

▶ The Chief/Sheriff and/or command staff does not embrace the importance of crime reporting and thus doesn't become well versed in the rules. The message isn't sent from the top that officers and supervisors will be held accountable to the timely and proper submission of reports to Records. Ask those that have been in the news for having bad crime stats and you can bet they wish they had.

▶ Conversely, officers don't understand or outright reject quality control by records personnel. They become defensive about mistakes and fall victim to the false narrative that Records shouldn't be reviewing or correcting reports. This is an abject falsehood that must be corrected from above. The very job of the records unit is quality control. Records units exist to ensure reporting is done properly. Many officers don't realize that by correcting reports records personnel are actually ensuring a more professional work product on their behalf.

▶ The agency fails to provide report writing and basic UCR training to officers. UCR training doesn't mean knowing all of the nuances of the program. It means reporting crimes properly as described herein in a consistent and appropriate manner to ensure the agency's statistics are correct; an important issue.

Cases Status, Disposition and Exceptional Clearances

The UCR program states crimes should be classified as they "become known" to law enforcement. The agency is to classify the report according to the way the crime was reported to the police. However, there are occasions when the investigation determines the reported crime was actually something different.

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DID A RAPE OCCUR?

When it is difficult to determine if in fact a crime occurred, the report should be written as it was reported. The crime of rape is often incorrectly reported as a "suspicious circumstance" or "information report" when the victim doesn't clearly remember the incident, yet believes a rape occurred.

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There are also times when the officer is unable to determine if in fact a crime has occurred. Probable cause is not the standard when it comes to writing reports; it's a standard that must be met to make an arrest.

When someone reports a crime, absent evidence it didn't happen, a report is written to document the incident.

These are the correct approaches to classifying a report:

▶ Classify the report according to the way the crime was reported if the investigation verifies the crime happened as reported and keep the case open for further investigation.

▶ Classify the report according to the way the crime was reported if the investigation verifies the crime happened as reported and close the case when no further investigation will occur due to the circumstances.

▶ Classify the report according to the way the crime was reported and change the status to "unfounded" when the investigation determines that a crime didn't happen or it happened in another jurisdiction. Accordingly, reported crimes which are difficult to verify should remain classified as the reported crime until the investigation determines otherwise. If a final determination cannot be made regarding the validity of the reported crime, it should remain as is, i.e. Rape cases which cannot be "proven". Proving a crime or establishing probable cause is not the standard for taking a report. When a bike is reported stolen, the officer doesn't establish probable cause to prove it was stolen. A theft report is written.

▶ Classify the report according to the correct criminal classification when the investigation determines the crime that occurred is different from the crime reported (and keep the case open or closed as appropriate). If this determination is made after the fact (i.e. by a detective), a supplement should be written requesting to change the title of the report.

▶ Classify the report according to the appropriate non-criminal classification when the incident was not reported as or did not involve a crime (civil in nature, suspicious incident, lost property, etc).

Case Status

Your system should have only 5 case status options as follows (note: different RMS label the status field different names):

1. **Open/pending:** the case remains open pending further investigation;

2. **Closed/suspended/inactive:** all leads have been exhausted and no further investigation will occur;

3. **Unfounded:** the reported crime did not occur or occurred in another jurisdiction

4. **Cleared by Arrest:** the crime was solved and the offender has been arrested

5. **Cleared by Exception:** the crime was solved but due to extenuating circumstances, an arrest could not be made.

Agencies often customize RMS incident status and disposition tables with incorrect options- usually because someone added to this list for their own needs. They should contain the standard UCR options and a minimal amount of custom options needed to cover the basics ("referred to other jurisdiction", "warrant issued", etc.). First determine from your vendor how each field interacts with UCR reporting. Status is typically the current status of the investigation. Disposition typically represents the final outcome of the case and how it gets reported to UCR. Verify this in your system.
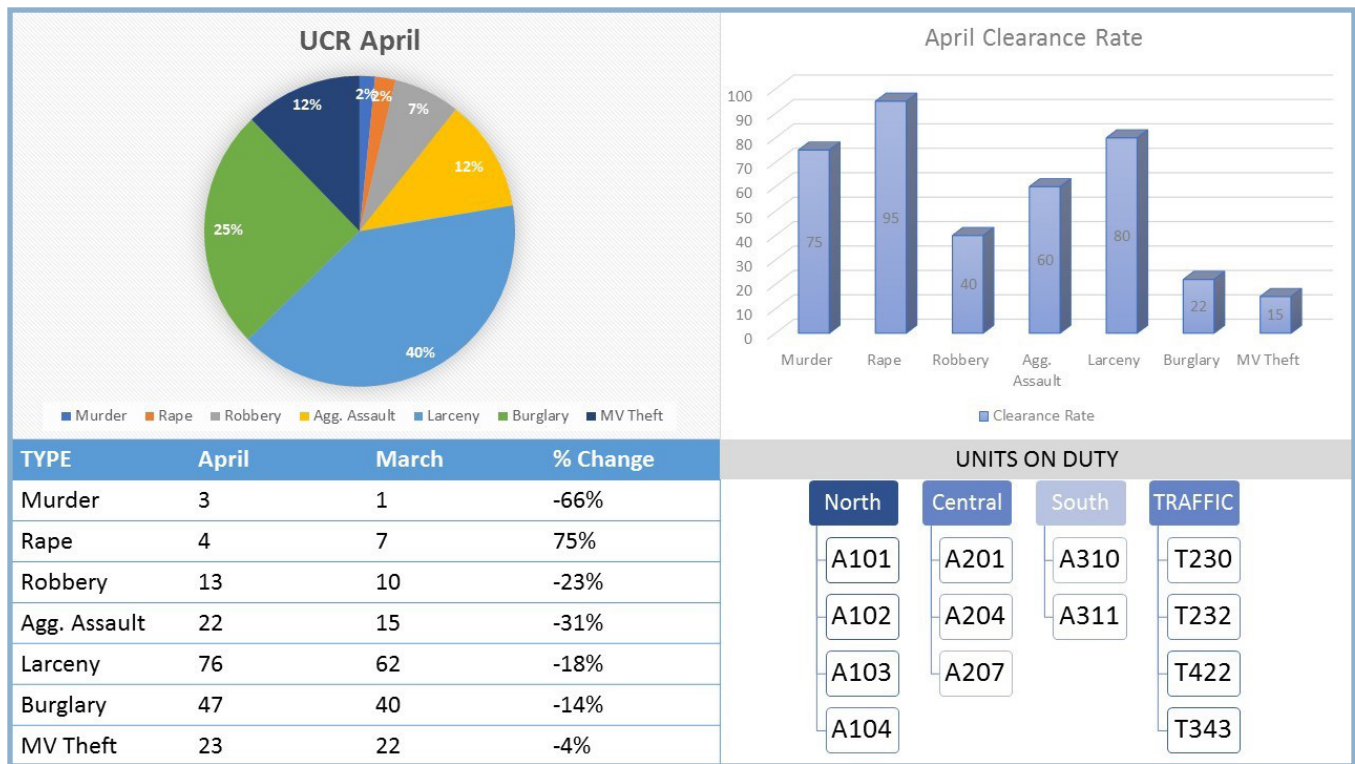
How to Exceptionally Clear a Crime

An "exceptional clearance" is used when a crime has been solved but the offender cannot be arrested for reasons beyond the control of your agency/investigator. In order to properly use this status the following four conditions must all be in place:

1. The offender has been identified;

2. There is enough info to support an arrest, charge and prosecution of the offender;

3. The location of the offender is known;

4. There is some reason beyond the control of the officer/investigator that prevents making an arrest of the offender.

When these conditions exist, the case status should be "exceptionally cleared", and the other field which contains the reasons for this status should be changed to one of the following:

▶ Death of the offender

▶ Extradition of the offender is declined

▶ Victim refuses to cooperate

▶ Juvenile released to parent/guardian

▶ Prosecution declined

UCR April

Murder 2%, Rape 2%, Robbery 7%, Agg. Assault 12%, Larceny 40%, Burglary 25%, MV Theft 12%

■ Murder ■ Rape ■ Robbery ■ Agg. Assault ■ Larceny ■ Burglary ■ MV Theft

April Clearance Rate

| Murder | Rape | Robbery | Agg. Assault | Larceny | Burglary | MV Theft |
| 75 | 95 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 22 | 15 |

■ Clearance Rate

TYPE	April	March	% Change
Murder	3	1	-66%
Rape	4	7	75%
Robbery	13	10	-23%
Agg. Assault	22	15	-31%
Larceny	76	62	-18%
Burglary	47	40	-14%
MV Theft	23	22	-4%

UNITS ON DUTY

North	Central	South	TRAFFIC
A101	A201	A310	T230
A102	A204	A311	T232
A103	A207		T422
A104			T343

The Uniform Crime Reporting Program is the nationwide standard for the proper reporting of crime in America. To not know it or not follow it is troublesome and leads to incorrect information being provided to our citizens. It also leads to accusations of falsified crime data and losing the trust of the communities served. It also can lead to the demise of a career. It's also preventable.

Crime Counts

The UCR Summary Reporting and NIBRS programs both count crimes according to their type. Crimes against property are counted per incident (regardless of the number of victims). Crimes against persons are counted per victim. **NOTE:** robbery is considered a property crime in the UCR program and thus is counted per incident, not per victim. In NIBRS, there is the added type of crimes against society (victim-less crimes i.e. drugs, prostitution). These are counted per violation.

Time and Place, Time and Place, Time and Place!

Getting your officers, supervisors and records staff to remember this rule is imperative. The Time and Place rule is what dictates how many reports should be written for an incident involving more than one crime and is perhaps the most misunderstood and misapplied aspect of UCR reporting.

It is also an example of one of the kinds of mistakes the UCR error-check/validation tool won't catch since it's not technical in nature, but rather dependent upon the principle of "garbage in, garbage out".

When an offense involves multiple crimes, multiple victims, different property owners, or multiple suspects, there is a tendency to decide how many reports to write based on deciphering these circumstances. Officers

will think, "well there are different owners, so each one should get a report". Or, "five bikes were stolen here so it's one report for each bike, right Sarge?".

There is only one question to ask in these situations: *was there a break in the time and place the different crimes occurred?* If so, a report is written for each one. It's that simple. If however all of the crimes occurred at the same time and place, one report should be written. There is one exception to this rule. When the investigation reveals multiple crimes occurred involving the same victim and same offender, and they constitute ongoing criminal activity, even though at different times and places, one report can be written. An example is a fraud case in which an employee embezzles cash from the employer's business over the course of several months.

In our experience, the majority of agencies we have worked with don't follow the Time and Place rule and consequently, most are either under- or over-reporting crimes. They also typically have many statute table errors in RMS, leading to improper coding of crimes (and incorrect counts of crimes).

NIBRS Overview and 2019 Changes

The National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) was created in the 1980's as a newer version of the Uniform Crime Reporting program's Summary Reporting System (SRS). It has been utilized by about 30% of police agencies around the U. S. since that time. In 2016, the FBI announced it would retire the SRS and require all agencies to transition to NIBRS by 2021.

In NIBRS there is no Hierarchy Rule- up to 10 offenses are counted per incident. Additionally, there are more offenses reported in NIBRS, more details per incident, and arrests and offenses are linked in NIBRS. Unlike in the SRS, NIBRS offense codes are consistent across the nation — the codes are standardized. Traditional UCR offense codes vary across systems and jurisdictions.

Instead of Part I and II crimes, NIBRS offenses are divided into Group A and Group B offense types. They are grouped into 3 crime categories of Crimes Against Persons (counted per victim), Crimes Against Property (counted per incident), and Crimes Against Society (counted per crime against society).

GROUP A OFFENSES

Animal Cruelty	Vandalism	Homicide Offenses	Prostitution
Arson	Drug Offenses	Human Trafficking	Robbery
Assaults	Embezzlement	Kidnapping/Abduction	Sex Offenses (Forcible)
Bribery	Extortion/Blackmail	Larceny Offenses	Sex Offenses (Non-Forcible)
Burglary	Fraud Offenses	Motor Vehicle Theft	Stolen Property
Counterfeiting/Forgery	Gambling Offenses	Pornography	Weapons Law Violations

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"Sarge, how many reports do I write? One? Or one for each victim?"

GROUP B OFFENSES

Bad Checks	Disorderly Conduct	Drunkenness
Family Offenses (Non-Violent)	Peeping Tom	All Other Offenses
Curfew/Loitering	DUI	
Liquor Law Violations	Trespassing	

Converting to NIBRS reporting requires much more than just changing some things in RMS. Aside from making technological changes including updating tables, pick-lists, and data fields, personnel will require training, particularly Records staff who will need to become intimately familiar with the additional elements that are reported and need to be reviewed when checking incident reports.

Agencies should strongly consider converting the prior year's summary data to NIBRS to enable a smooth transition and valid crime comparisons pre- and post-NIBRS transition.

Upon converting, the new NIBRS data should be tested for accuracy and in fact, agencies are required to become certified to submit NIBRS data (see Processes and Procedures of NIBRS Certification).

Law enforcement constituencies including the public and their elected officials will need an understanding of the changes in counting methodology and the resulting changes in the crime data. Due to the elimination of the Hierarchy Rule and the addition of more crime types which get counted in NIBRS, there will be a slight increase in the numbers, albeit minimally (see Effects of NIBRS on Crime Statistics).

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, is planning. There will be a number of resources impacted during the conversion process and planning ahead will ensure success. PRI provides end-to-end NIBRS conversion services including planning, data conversion, implementation, testing, training and certification.

Acting in Concert

"Acting in concert" is a circumstance that also determines how many reports should be written in situations involving more than one offender and the commission of more than one crime. To be considered an "incident" (one report), all of the offenders have to actually commit or assist in the commission of all of the crimes in an incident in order for it to be counted and reported as such. The offenders must be aware of,

ACTING IN CONCERT SCENARIO (p.12, 2019 NIBRS User Manual)

Two offenders robbed a bar, forcing the bartender to surrender money from the cash register at gunpoint. The robbers also took money and jewelry from three customers. One of the robbers, in searching for more customers to rob, found a female customer in the rest room and raped her there without the knowledge of the other offender. When the rapist returned, both robbers left. In this example, there were two incidents: one involving Robbery and the other involving Rape, because the offenders were not acting in concert in both offenses. The LEA should report two incidents, each with one offense.

and consent to, the commission of all of the offenses; or even if non-consenting, their actions assist in the commission of all of the offenses (p.11, NIBRS User Manual 2019). Remember, under NIBRS all crimes in a report which are part of the UCR program get counted. Accordingly, when a case is cleared by arrest, all of the crimes listed in the report would be cleared by arrest. So, following the "acting in concert" rule is important.

In the previous scenario, if the rape and the robbery were listed together on one report, and the offender of the rape was caught and arrested, clearing the case by arrest would result in your data incorrectly reporting that the robbery was also cleared by arrest.

2019 Changes to NIBRS Program (refer to the 2019 NIBRS Manual for full listing of changes)

▶ The following negligent manslaughter definition will be effective on January 1, 2019:

"This offense includes killings resulting from hunting accidents, gun cleaning, children playing with guns, and arrests associated with driving under the influence, distracted driving (using a cell/smart phone) and reckless driving traffic fatalities. It does not include deaths of persons due to their own negligence, accidental deaths not resulting from gross negligence, and accidental traffic fatalities." (p. 32, 2019 NIBRS User Manual).

▶ Identity Theft and Hacking/Computer Invasion added to the list of Cargo theft-related offenses, these offenses will become effective on January 1, 2019.

▶ Traffic fatalities associated with driving under the influence, distracted driving (using a cell/smart phone), and reckless driving traffic fatalities are included as negligent manslaughters. Accidental traffic fatalities, accidental deaths (not resulting from gross negligence), or deaths of persons due to their own negligence are not to be included as Negligent Manslaughters. LEAs should report information regarding all other Negligent Manslaughters regardless of actions to prosecute (p. 120, 2019 NIBRS User Manual).

▶ As a result of the APB recommendation to collect Vehicular Manslaughter offenses under Negligent Manslaughter, beginning on January 1, 2019, (Hand-held Devices) will be added to the end of C = Computer Equipment (P. 74, 2019 NIBRS User Manual).

▶ When Negligent Manslaughter offenses are reported due to the offender driving under the influence, driving distracted while using a cell/smart phone, or driving recklessly, the data value 33 = Other Negligent Weapon Handling should be used. (p. 121, 2019 NIBRS User Manual).

▶ The offense of Domestic and Family Violence will be added to the NIBRS:

"The use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force or a weapon; or the use of coercion or intimidation; or committing a crime against property by a current or former spouse, parent, or guardian of the victim; a person with whom the victim shares a child in common; a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate

nature with the victim; a person who is cohabiting with or has cohabited with the victim as a spouse, parent, or guardian; or by a person who is or has been similarly situated to a spouse, parent, or guardian of the victim."

Why Quality Control is So Important in Records

"No Records Clerk is going to tell me how to write a report!" That's what one sergeant recently said during a records management assessment PRI was conducting for the agency. Unfortunately, this mind set is all too common in the profession. If your agency does **not** have this cultural mindset, you're blessed. If it does, let's go over some solutions.

LIFEBLOOD OF THE AGENCY

" Information is the lifeblood of the agency. If it's mismanaged in any way, there's going to be a catastrophe eventually. "

Ed Claughton, President, PRI
Houston Chronicle, May 31, 2014

There are many agencies who do take this function very seriously and have done a fantastic job of instilling the importance of producing good, quality police reports. Others aren't even aware of its importance.

Police officers are generally unaware of the requirements surrounding police/public records and crime reporting regulations. Unfortunately, most academies don't teach, not even just one hour, the fact there are laws governing what can and cannot be released to the public and there are rules for reporting crime statistics. Officers often don't know about or appreciate the level of work that is required to make sure the reporting officer, the parties involved in the report, the public and the department itself are getting the right information into the right hands at the right time.

All too often however we hear of agencies that have directed their records personnel to not read or correct reports containing errors or to maintain procedures designed to "protect" the officer from being bothered by report corrections, believing they have more important things to deal with. To them we say, "then expect to read about your agency in the headlines someday", and not in a good way.

The primary goal that every agency should build into the fabric of its records management function is to ensure that all documentation is **1) accurate 2) well-written and 3) error-free**. Information is the lifeblood of any organization but when the organization is dealing with the protection of life and liberty its proper management becomes really important.

The information management life-cycle includes 6 stages: creation, collection, processing, maintenance, dissemination and disposition. If there is a breakdown in any of these, the information can be spoiled, lost or improperly changed, the results of which can be catastrophic for a police department.

In order to achieve a thorough quality control program the department must send the message at every level that it will not accept poorly written reports and that records personnel will in fact correct or reject

reports containing mistakes. Furthermore, quality control means ensuring there are no other "clerical" errors in report processing. What follows is a case in point which says it all.

South Carolina Church Shooting

On June 17, 2015 a mass shooting occurred at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, involving the murder of 9 church parishioners. The shooter, Dylann Roof, used a gun he should not have been able to purchase because of a previous felony conviction. Due to a series of clerical errors made during the processing of the local arrest report and the background check done by the FBI for the purchase of the gun, he was able to buy it and kill 9 innocent Christians driven by racial hatred.

According to this article by Reuters, "South Carolina sheriff says clerical error helped Dylann Roof buy gun", a serious clerical error led to the murder. The article stated:

> *"Dylann Roof, 21, was arrested by a Columbia Police Department officer on a drug charge and jailed on Feb. 28, 2015 but a clerk wrongly listed the county sheriff's office as the arresting agency, the Lexington County sheriff's office said in a statement Monday. Two days later a county official corrected the name of the arresting agency — but only internally — to list the Columbia Police Department, Lexington County Sheriff Jay Koon said in a statement Monday. However, that correct information never entered a database used by the FBI. In mid-April when a Federal Bureau of Investigations examiner conducted a federal background check for Roof's pending purchase of a gun — the weapon now believed to have been used in the church murders — the FBI found Roof's incorrect arrest information and mistakenly contacted the Lexington County records division.*

> *"A records employee advised the FBI that the Columbia Police Department was the arresting agency," Lexington County Sheriff Jay Koon, said in a statement on Monday. The examiner made several calls trying to find the correct information but never tracked down the Columbia Police Department report in which Roof admitted to drug possession after being arrested at a local mall, the FBI said last week. That would have barred Roof from buying the weapon, FBI Director James Comey told reporters at a briefing Friday."*

This is why we have sergeants **and** records personnel review reports. This is why quality control is important. This is why error-rate tracking, training and auditing should be in place. The information you manage can mean the difference between life and death.

Police Records Accuracy and Efficiency

When police departments produce crime statistics which are inaccurate, whether through UCR or in-house reports, the impact can be felt on various levels (that is if the inaccuracy is discovered). Questions may come from the public, challenges can arise when seeking grant funding (often based in part on local crime

statistics), and the criminal investigations unit can be second guessed on how cases are being cleared. Usually the records unit is scrutinized first. The long-term effect of inaccurate statistics can be devastating, particularly when they go undiscovered for long periods of time. Learning years after the fact that crime was either much higher or lower than previously reported may lead a department to reevaluate and significantly change how resources are being deployed but first, it must find why such a disparity occurred.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Empowering Records Employees

Finding the cause of problematic crime statistics can be very difficult since errors can occur during the creation, processing, or maintenance phase of police reports. The task of sorting through vast amounts of data as well as report processing performance and procedures can be overwhelming. Errors can occur from the moment a report is written. Officers can make mistakes which result in the improper classification of reports and when this occurs because of a lack of training, non-existent reporting manuals, or improper policy, the problem becomes a systemic issue that is compounded over time. Problems can also occur during the time that reports are reviewed and processed.

All reports should go through two levels of thorough review – once with the sergeant, and then by records personnel. If the reviewing sergeant misses a mistake it is incumbent upon the records unit to find it and ensure its correction. No police department should take the stance that records personnel should not be reviewing the reports it produces. This is the very reason police records personnel exist – to not only maintain and disseminate information but also to process it and ensure its correctness.
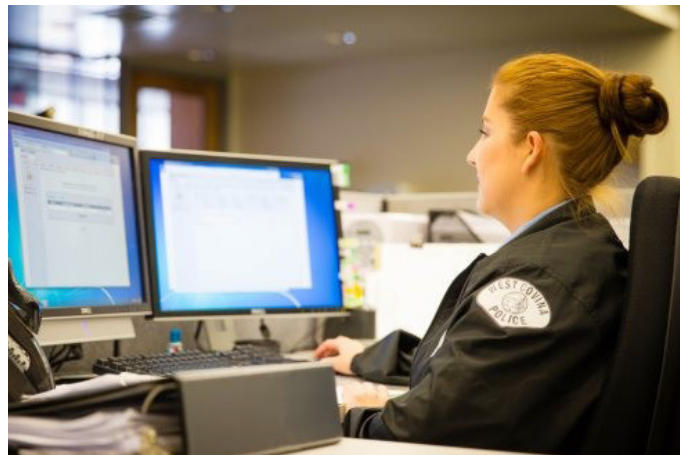
Why Use an Outside Resource?

By virtue of the fact erroneous crime figures are caused by any number of factors, including technological problems, police departments benefit greatly from turning to outside resources for assistance. Since the day to day operations of any organization must continue, the interruption of normal processes by spending time researching the cause of errors leads to a decrease in productivity, customer service, and employee morale.

For a police department, this interruption of records operations translates into longer report turnaround times, backlogged tasks, crime statistics which are dated, and citizens who can't get copies of their reports in a timely manner.

Furthermore, faulty data which is the result of technical problems with records management systems require a level of expertise often not found within police or even I.T. departments.

While technology personnel may be the source of expertise in computer and systems maintenance and repair, they sometimes are not well versed in the complexities of UCR and its guidelines. States typically

have thousands of statutes on the books and police records management systems have databases which should contain the majority of them. Each of these statutes should have a corresponding unique UCR code which is what enables statistical crime reporting via UCR standards across the nation or "state to state".

The sheer number alone of state statutes, along with complicated UCR rules, makes plenty of room for errors. If just one code is off in a system's code table, the statistics for that particular crime category will be invalid. The crime of burglary for example typically has various sub-sections for the type of forced entry, whether occupied or unoccupied, armed or unarmed offenders, etc. A one-digit error in the master UCR code for the burglary chapter could potentially cause reporting errors in all categories of burglary.

This problem is compounded immensely when police departments borrow or cut and paste code tables from other departments as a matter of convenience. The result: tables with thousands of statutes which inevitably contain errors get passed along from agency to agency as they procure new RMS systems, update existing tables, or want to replace tables in their entirety. The accumulation of junk data is a real concern. Getting rid of it is an even bigger problem. Very few police departments have the internal resources or time to scour the vast amount of electronic data made up of code tables, pick lists, UCR coding, and prior police reports in general in order to determine the source of errors and the correction thereof. Validating an entire code table requires extremely meticulous work and painstaking care so as to ensure every statute, sub section, title, and UCR code are properly listed.

Audit finds TPD overreported crime data

Karl Etters, Democrat staff writer   Published 3:56 p.m. ET May 18, 2018 | Updated 9:47 a.m. ET May 21, 2018

An audit of the Tallahassee Police Department's crime stats – which for three years have put the capital city's crime rate at the top of the state (/story/news/2018/03/04/crime-continues-loom-large-over-tallahassee/341481002/) – found that there may be less crime than originally reported.

That's why TPD says it's changing the way it catalogs incidents.

Completed by the Miami-based PRI Management Group for $33,743, the audit found the number of incidents affecting annual data may have been incorrectly reported higher.

(Photo: Hali Tauxe/Democrat)

It found that the differences in definitions between the FBI – which compiles crime data annually – and Florida Statues may have been a reason behind the higher-than-normal crimes reported in Tallahassee city limits.

More: Leon County Crime Report (http://data.tallahassee.com/fdle-crime-report/leon/)

Human error and gaps in quality control of reports filed were also major contributors, the audit stated.

"The department was concerned about inaccuracies it found in its crime data and accordingly, was interested in undergoing an independent audit," PRI wrote in its report. "This inherent conflict between Uniform Crime Report and statute-based crime reporting has led to significant crime count errors in Tallahassee."

In March, TPD reported a 14 percent decrease in overall crime in 2017 compared to the year before. The Leon County Sheriff's Office reported a 9.4 percent decrease in crime in 2017 compared to a year earlier.

Utilizing the services of an outside consultant with specific expertise in law enforcement reporting ensures the agency can continue efficient operations without consuming valuable employee time, increasing overtime, and risking future problematic crime statistics.

Just How Long Should You Keep Your Records?

How long should you keep records and data? While the simple answer is refer to your state's records retention schedules, the reality is there are several things to consider before destroying your agency's information. This includes not only following the law but also ensuring 1) policy is in place and is followed, and 2) you balance the need to keep the information against the liability inherent in holding on to it. The tendency in law enforcement is to retain records longer than necessary. While some information may retain informational or intelligence value longer than other more routine records, it is important to recognize that if a record exists, it can be requested. If it is public record, then it must be released and this is where a balancing act between competing needs comes into play. Before exploring this concept one must first understand the methodologies of dispositioning.
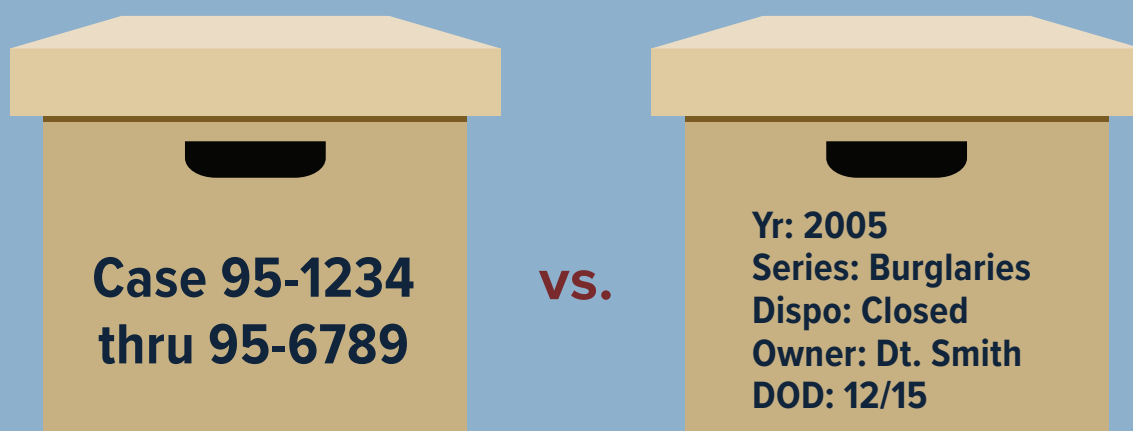
Of importance to remember when it comes to records disposition (the formal process of analyzing, identifying, and destroying eligible records) is that information is not just on paper and/or computers but also on backup tapes, servers, or disks. Regardless of which media you are dealing with, the rules are the same. Don't forget these additional formats exist and be sure to apply the same retention schedules to all of them unless your state law says otherwise. Some states may indicate to keep one format longer than the other in certain circumstances. Check with your state division of library, archives, or information services for guidance. The destruction of records is not something to take lightly. Those tasked with this responsibility should be trained in records management and have intimate knowledge of this potentially high liability issue. It is equally important that records which need to be retained are not inadvertently destroyed as are records that should be destroyed are not unconsciously retained.

Upon determining what state law indicates it is imperative to have a written policy which not only mirrors your state retention schedules but also dictates the methodologies of carrying out a systematic process of records disposition agency-wide. This includes the who, what, when, where, and how of destruction. Who is responsible for this process, what is to be destroyed, and when, where, and how? Acceptable methods are also determined by law and may include shredding or burning. Depending on the size of the agency it is prudent to distribute this responsibility among "records liaisons" who represent different units, divisions, or bureaus.

One person should be assigned and trained in this process from each area who in turn reports to the records manager the outcome of the annual disposition process including what was destroyed and how much. This information is always recorded on official forms provided by the appropriate governing body and submitted accordingly.

The annual process of destroying records is a much simpler process if they are filed and stored in such a manner that makes them readily identifiable as being eligible for destruction. This is accomplished by indexing records in a systematic, containerized fashion such that similar records are grouped and stored together according to their dates and content. Containerizing records is a good approach which means different types of records which are related to the same case can be filed together and destroyed together according to the retention schedule of the item which has the longest retention requirement.

Case 95-1234 thru 95-6789

vs.

**Yr: 2005
Series: Burglaries
Dispo: Closed
Owner: Dt. Smith
DOD: 12/15**

Using a burglary case as an example which has an incident report, an arrest, a property sheet, booking photo, and statement form, these are all items which individually may have different retention schedules. However if they are filed together in the same "container", they may be destroyed simultaneously despite their individual retention schedules which otherwise would have to be followed had they been filed individually. Again be sure to check with your state's records authority. Lastly, the destruction of records involves a balancing act between the need to maintain law enforcement intelligence, to avoid liability, and to comply with accreditation standards if applicable. Agencies should consider whether or not they can and should keep records longer than what state law requires.

The need for investigative intelligence is important and records are often a critical source of information needed to put the pieces of a puzzle together. Conversely, it is just as important to recognize that the very records law enforcement agencies create to protect themselves and justify their actions are the same records which are used as evidence against them when they get sued. If records don't otherwise have a need to be retained and are eligible for destruction, they should be destroyed as soon as possible.

In conclusion, the destruction of records is governed by law and should be a process that is taken seriously. It is an issue which should be built into the organizational culture as one that everyone is in part responsible for. The records life cycle has a beginning and an end which if handled properly will reduce costs, make access easier, and limit liability.

It's High Time to Go Digital

Arrest forms. Booking records. Statements. Bonds. Affidavits. It's time our prosecutors' offices embrace the digital era and start accepting electronic records. Across the country our court systems are going paperless, cutting tax payer costs, improving the timeliness of criminal justice and making the lives of everyone in the system easier. Yet, the majority of police agencies in America are still required to send hard copies of case related records, in many cases by driving them over in a car or sending them via inter-office mail; they are required to send the…"original".

The law fully allows electronic forms, digital signatures, and scanned copies in place of…."the original". Unfortunately, many local courts have created judicial procedure which contravenes state law and have created policies mandating paper copies. Why? Typically, such inefficiency is borne either out of mere stubbornness and a desire to stick to "how it's always been done" or, for the purpose of avoiding potential evidentiary hearings during which the parties involved must prove the validity of the electronic version of the record. Neither of these are valid reasons for not advancing efficiency. If they were, the jurisdictions which have gone paperless over the last few years would not have done so.

While our courthouses are diving into the digital age, many prosecutors' offices remain steadfast in having anything related to an arrest sent on paper. Despite the willingness, interest, capability and legal backing to digitize these records, our police records personnel are having to spend countless hours preparing paper case files.

Below are some resources to help you with the process of implementing a digital transformation project:

▶ Download your state's Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) law (available with a simple Google search). Review what it says and become familiar with the fact that it makes electronic government records legal and valid.

▶ Contact your Clerk of Court and the person in charge of records management at your prosecutors' office. Have a preliminary discussion to find out if there are plans to accept electronic police records and case files. Remember, we're not just talking about what comes out of RMS; we're talking about all of those other attachments typically on paper including booking and arrest related records.

▶ Get your Chief/Sheriff involved. If there is resistance, it may be a battle that requires buy-in from the top and headstrong leadership (of course, PRI can help too!).

Today's Records Management is Everyone's Business

There is no doubt technology is the driving force of law enforcement today. Information-led policing and advanced analytics has been the approach for some time now. Yet with it has come an unintended and not always welcome byproduct that has led to trouble for some agencies. A level of scrutiny like never before of the information itself has created headlines resulting from allegations of manipulated crime statistics. The decrease in crime over the last several years has led to many audits as well as curious reporters on the hunt for discrepancies. With the advent of technology, including police reports that are obtainable online, our numbers are everywhere.

In 2004 the Broward Sheriff's Office was tarnished with highly publicized incidents of cooking the books. In 2007, the integrity of Chief Timoney and the Miami Police Department were publicly called into question because of allegations that their crime stats were routinely altered. While the Miami Police Department was cleared after an investigation, several detectives and supervisors were arrested in the Broward case.

Why then does law enforcement often not have measures in place to prevent discrepancies, errors, or even downright manipulation such as cooking the books? Are we failing in the proper use of all this great technology? Are we not truly embracing accountability? Are we neglecting to properly manage our records management functions or to supervise those who work in these areas? The answer is probably yes to all of the above.

The ongoing evolution of technology calls for a change in the way we do business. Software applications in and of themselves are not the solution for problematic records management or information sharing shortcomings. Without holistic approaches to improving these ever-important issues, technology alone cannot solve the ills that countless agencies face in their records sections.

How many times have records been lost despite having the latest and greatest programs? How many personnel have underperformed because of a lack of direction, leadership, and training? If your records are not managed properly or your officers do not receive appropriate training, then plan on someday reading about your agency in the paper.

Agencies should have internal checks and balances and one singular body that is the ultimate authority on the proper collection, processing, maintenance, and dissemination of reports. No longer are records personnel just considered clerical support but rather well-trained technology savvy employees who are empowered to closely analyze and approve or disapprove of agency records. These personnel are the ones who conduct research and submit statistical information to the FBI, the media, and the public. The advancement of technology and today's focus on numbers demands that they are trained not only in UCR but also in the same criminal laws that the officers are.

There are three components to ensuring the records unit is operating efficiently:

1. Developing and monitoring key performance indicators including turn-around time and reporting error-rate

2. Sound records management practices

3. Maximizing the use of available technology.

These key components will help to ensure your agency produces accurate information which is designed to keep the public informed, meet the regulations of the UCR program, and provide an ever so important gauge of how well the department is doing its job.

Creating a sound records management program begins with producing valid police reports. Aside from proper grammar, punctuation, and prose, reports should be clear, concise, and written as if telling a story using only the facts as the plot. Most importantly, reports should be classified correctly to accurately reflect the crime that occurred. If reports fall short in any of these areas the judges, attorneys, and citizens who read them will naturally call into question the level of professionalism of the agency as a whole.

Report writing training should occur on an annual basis as should report review training for supervisors. This brings consistency to the review process which when absent means reports will not be equally scrutinized, a phenomenon which also affects statistical accuracy.

5 steps to lower mistakes and raise the quality of reports:

1 Training

Annual report writing training should teach users how to write well written police reports as well as how to use the agency's software to do so.

2 Manual

Draft a report writing manual specific to agency protocol and software including a listing of commonly made mistakes, specific report examples, and narrative requirements. PRI has such a manual on our site.

3 The "Corrections List"

Publish a monthly "Report Correction List" which includes a listing of reports found by records personnel containing errors even after supervisory review. Include the respective officers and reviewing supervisors names and a description of the errors, and calculate the average error-rate. For larger agencies, build a dashboard (PRI can help).

4 Report Advisories

Publish Report Advisories via email informing personnel of any reoccurring problems with reports in order to ensure officers are kept informed as their schedules change.

5 Information Management Committee

Regularly convene representatives from throughout the department to address and resolve technology and records management needs.

Today's Police Records Section

The second stage of creating a solid records management program is to make sure the records unit is operating like a business. Identify the measures of progress, performance standards, and customer service issues in your records section and then conduct an operational analysis to determine how they are functioning. How long is it taking for reports to become available to the public? How are reports getting corrected? How much time is spent on data processing and data entry? Gone are the days of records

personnel who were only tasked with typing in reports, making copies, filing, and distributing the mail. Today personnel must be proficient in the use of advanced software programs and have in depth knowledge of complicated UCR rules and criminal law. Furthermore, the notion that records management systems and field reporting software makes the job of records management easier is somewhat misleading.

While collecting, maintaining, and querying information is far more efficient, processing the data requires a skill set beyond what has typically been required.

Records staff must be trained in research, and statistical analysis. They must be empowered, entrusted, and held accountable to produce accurate and timely information on behalf of the department. And yes, they should be thoroughly reviewing every police report that your department produces!

Leadership, Training, and Participative Management

The problems that are typically found in records units require the leadership of someone capable of implementing methodical, deliberate, and unwavering advancement at the policy, administrative, and operational levels. Such a person must demonstrate leadership skills including patience, fairness, firmness, integrity, trust, loyalty, support, and confidence. The records supervisor is charged with producing accurate crime statistics, ensuring the department is compliant with various legal requirements, and managing employees during a time of change.

Training is paramount to most other efforts at change. Not only should records personnel receive training in public records law, criminal law, and UCR regulations, but so should officers, detectives, and supervisors. Ask your officers in roll call if they know what UCR is. The fact that some will indicate they have no idea is a testament to the need for training in this area. How can an officer go through an entire police academy and never receive even an hour in the classroom on UCR? While some agencies have taken the stance that officers should not be concerned with UCR, others have embraced the idea of educating them on this topic. Ignoring the significance it has in law enforcement is to deny an officer knowledge in one of the most fundamental aspects of his or her profession measurements of crime.

How can agencies work towards bridging the gap that exists between state statutes and UCR rules if sworn personnel don't learn about UCR? Officers need a basic understanding of UCR just as records personnel need to know certain criminal statutes.

Finally, successful change is only possible by involving your employees. In records, where management decisions are not of the critical incident type, participative management is most appropriate. Involve your employees in drafting changes to policies or manuals in their respective areas of expertise. Assign projects that are commensurate with their abilities and guide them through to fruition.

Maximizing the Use of Technology

Lastly, building a records management program requires maximizing the use of available technologies. If you don't have a records management and mobile field reporting system in place then it's time to get one. Procuring such technology is no doubt a big project but one that must be undertaken.

Utilize free resources offered by the International Association of Chief's of Police and the Law Enforcement Information Technology Standards Council for guidance. If you already have these systems in place then determine if they are being utilized to their fullest capabilities. Now that you have an understanding of the

importance of police records management, work towards to keeping your agency out of the headlines and on the path to producing accurate and compliant information.

Transforming a Police Agency one Record at a Time

Collaborative reform. Consent decrees. The need for these is often based on issues that run deep within and throughout the agency, not on isolated problems that are one-dimensional. They are matters which transverse organizational structure and transcend the obvious. They typically can be traced to deficient training, substandard hiring practices, poor leadership, bias and the like- all of which create a broken culture and bad performance. Yet one common denominator often overlooked is an issue that pervades law enforcement. It is an issue that sets the tone of a police agency; it serves as one of the most visible representations of the organization's level of professionalism.

Next to the officer in the field, the assigned detective and the Chief's/Sheriff's public facing activity, it is the information produced by the agency that shapes the opinion of so many. From the crime stats which get published to the reports that are read by victims, attorney's, insurance companies and the media, to the social media posts and videos posted, information is at the center of it all. When mismanaged, these sometimes high-profile channels of information paint a picture of dysfunction, often rooted in reality. Once made public, the mismanaged information reveals bad crime data, missing records or improper use of law enforcement systems and when this happens, the agency faces a firestorm of media attention and criticism. One of the somewhat common elements of consent decrees is sub-standard records management operations.

After working with literally hundreds of police agencies, we have seen professionalism shine through in the investigative records, quality control procedure and accountability measures of those that are high-performing organizations. We've also seen too many that operate in paper-driven environments with low levels of productivity.

What we know at PRI is that records are important before most of our clients do. We have seen it happen all too often and fortunately for law enforcement, help is available. And we're really good at it.

Someone once said "you can't fix broken culture- you can only fix the things that cause it – then everything else will fall into line thereafter". There is some truth to that. Sometimes fixing the obvious requires going after the hidden.

In the 1990s when the City of New York underwent an unprecedented transformation, ending epic levels of violence and disorder to becoming a safe city, the police department targeted the unexpected – low level crimes and offenders, internal mismanagement matters, training and…information management among other things. It sent a message; suddenly things had to be done correctly or face the consequences. It worked.

Bill Bratton's book, "The Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic" is a fascinating read that any agency experiencing problems would benefit from.

If your officers and records staff aren't held accountable to producing information which is accurate, error-free and well-written, how can one expect the agency to perform the way it should when it comes to the obvious?

TECHNOLOGY

Making Sure Your CAD/RMS Project Goes Right

A police department in Pennsylvania made the news because its 1.2 million dollar RMS and field reporting project isn't going well. The system is not doing what it was promised to do and what should have been a 1 year project turned into 3. Worse yet, the most important element of the project, end-users, the officers who need and use the system the most, don't like the system. Their concerns are valid: having to enter the same information more than once; missing statutes (code tables); cumbersome interface.

The article quoted the Chief of Police who said: "It may not make officers on the street happy because it requires them to do a lot of work," he said. "It's a good system for management. If they're not happy, too bad … They have to work with the equipment we give them."[1]

Ample research from notable organizations such as the IACP, NIJ and IJIS Institute (which is readily available on the internet) indicates it is **this type of attitude and approach to a project that will doom it from the beginning.** Even common sense dictates that such disregard for the needs of the system's users is a recipe for disaster. With all of the information about technology initiatives that is available to law enforcement right on the internet, why do these kinds of failures still occur? The reasons can be many and this is why much work, research and due diligence must be done when undertaking such a project.

> ## WHAT NOT TO SAY
>
> " It's a good system for management. If they're not happy, too bad. They have to work with the equipment we give them. "

Here are **some key suggestions**:

First, do your research. Take the time to read the materials in the library on our site and follow what they say. Then you can begin working on the project itself, assuming you have obtained funding.

It is imperative to **form a governance structure** which is commensurate with the size and number of resources in your agency. A larger agency will require various committees charged with financial, technical, and oversight responsibilities and input. Someone must be in charge and buy-in must be obtained at the outset from all levels.

Assessing and documenting your agency's business processes and technical environment is imperative. This includes mapping out your key information workflows, approval procedures and the who, what, when, where, why and how of the way you manage information. Identifying the technical environment and what will be required of the new system will involve coordinating closely with your IT staff and aligning your needs

[1] http://timesleader.com/news/local-news/386268/W-B-system-just-wont-compute

with current industry standards. Networks, hardware, software, security and Global Reference Architecture must all be considered.

Begin a process of change management and stakeholder buy-in through regular meetings, informational sessions and enhancing internal communication strategies that keep employees up to speed on the project. Spend a lot of time determining end-user and system administrator needs from representatives in each and every corner of the department. Failing to get the input from those who know how to do the job and what will or won't work is critical to project success. This includes identifying both functional and technical needs as they relate to a new system.

Continue communicating up, down and horizontally within the agency and with any key external stakeholders to ensure open lines of communication continue. Begin to speak with other agencies about their systems and identify possible vendors that fit the bill. Be sure to consider vendors whose customer base and target market are agencies of similar size, scope and function. Avoid at all costs vendors whose growth has outpaced their capabilities to meet customer demands. Companies which have grown rapidly sometimes end up losing pace with their customer support requirements and getting help when something goes wrong becomes difficult.

Tech Projects: Planning Ahead with the Right People in Place
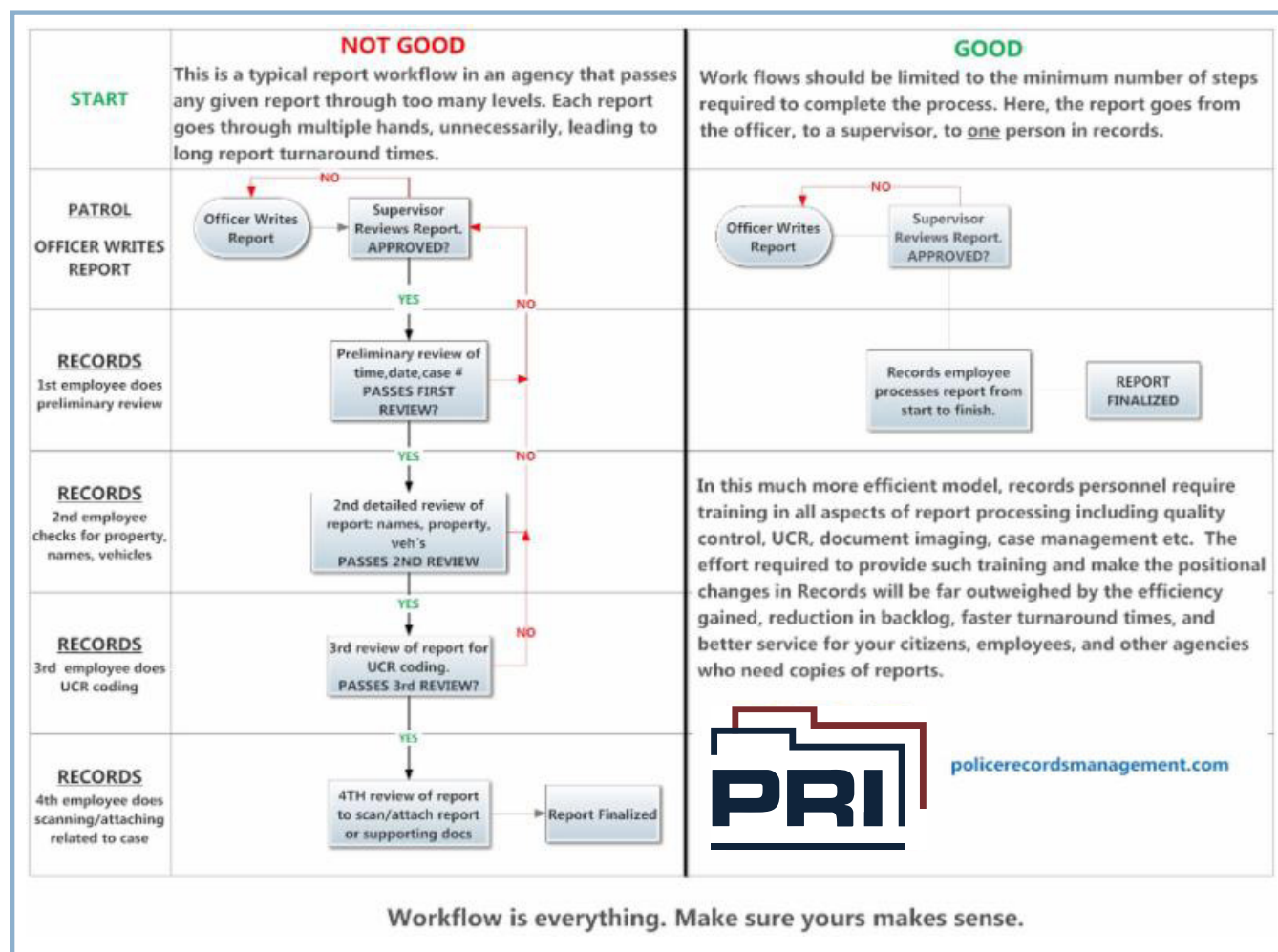
Another tech revolution is upon us. The question is will law enforcement make the changes necessary to traverse it correctly.

PRI has been a partner to, and unflinchingly supportive of, all our clients and law enforcement in general. It is our business to bring success to those interested in operating smarter, not harder; faster, not more leisurely; efficiently, not bureaucratically. We seek to educate and modernize law enforcement information management operations and when an opportunity for learning arises, we share it.

A recent article regarding the Baltimore Police Department [2] noted its incredibly inefficient report rejection and correction process which is handled by sending a paper copy of the report back to the district officer for correction via... courier. Let's learn.

Some simple changes including utilizing email and an electronic report rejection process could have profoundly positive results at the Baltimore Police Department. The article further revealed that reports are keyed in (data entry) and thousands of reports are pending entry – a duplicative process – and a very inefficient one at that. Lastly, the agency has no records retention schedules and old records are piling up.

This should not be happening. Anywhere. Ever. At all.

Efficient business process doesn't require a budget. It cuts costs and at a time when personnel shortages are plentiful, processes such as utilizing a courier to send back reports is inexplicable.

Take body-worn camera video as another example. Despite the capability of sending a link to a citizen to instantly view and download a copy of the video they have requested, agencies are still burning discs and sending them via US Mail. If the agency cannot afford to keep the videos in the vendor's cloud application, it should then consider a cost-effective alternative for sending the videos via another file sharing system like Sharefile, from the local server to the customer.

Upon receiving a public request for an officer's video, the Houston Police Department [3] removes the system's hard-drive from the computer where the video is stored, drives it across town for processing, burns a copy of the video, then drives the hard-drive back where it came from. Learning opportunity.

Before buying the latest and greatest shiny new tech tool, it is highly suggested the agency reviews its current information management business processes and workflows. Such a review will likely reveal room for improvement, the kind of which may negate the need to make a purchase altogether.

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[2] https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2018/06/baltimore-police-study-mandated-by-feds-finds-massive-tech-fails/

[3] https://policerecordsmanagement.com/2018/07/houston-bwc/

If the review still indicates a need for the technology, then it will at the very least reveal how the tech will impact the entire business process. Any new system will affect internal and external stakeholders and their operations in some way, whether it's accessing, sharing, or sending information, it will likely change.

The technology you have at your disposal today, already in place at your department, is likely not being used to its fullest potential. The level of technology available for purchase is extensive. When law enforcement finds itself operating in layers upon layers of systems, it is because the total concept of operations was not considered in advance.

Technology produces information, a.k.a "records", which must be managed efficiently – not via a courier.

While we've been extremely supportive of those who work in the police records management field over the years, we are also disheartened by the all too often occurrence of the wrong person being in this ever so important position. This is a mutual failure of the agency, and the individuals themselves who continue to operate utilizing archaic information management methods; who fail to improve efficiency, embrace technology, or build a strategic plan to modernize reporting, quality control, disposition, information sharing and document management (electronically!).

What we know at PRI is that records are important before most of our clients do. Your IT personnel are IT experts, not records management experts. Be thoughtful of who will manage the data (yes, public records) that will be produced in this continuing tech revolution.

It is time for police agencies to 1) recognize the significant impact on productivity and professionalism the Records Manager has at a police agency and 2) put the right person in that position who will advance modernization.

While the rest of the world utilizes a device in the palm of their hand to bank, shop, travel and send information, many records managers, courts and prosecutor's offices continue to insist on paper, faxes and wet-ink signatures – all of which is completely unnecessary, time consuming, costly and inefficient. If you are still one to believe that signatures are required and the "originals" mean paper, get online and start learning. Today. Read your state's "UETA" law. And work to be a wise steward of public dollars by improving your agency's operations.

How You Make This Happen

Strategic planning. Resist the temptation to buy the latest and greatest shiny new tech tools without a plan in place; without first determining if the purchase 1) aligns with the agency's goals, 2) is cost-effective and 3) will make the lives of both internal and external agency customers better- our officers, citizens and partner agencies.

They are all part of an inter-connected system and instead of viewing the impact of the tools solely through the lens of internal operations, they must be viewed in terms of their impact on the larger system – work flows within and between agencies, to and from our citizens and how they will function as part of the greater technology ecosystem and service to the public.

If the agency's focus is community policing, build the ecosystem to that end. If the goal is implementing data-driven policing, build a technology posture and business process environment which cohesively enables it. If internal agency reform is the goal, then consider only those systems which will together make it happen.

Lastly, if you don't have the time, resources or capabilities to bring it all together, get outside help. The value in bringing in external expertise will pay for itself quickly through the cost-savings achieved by building a strategic plan, surveying and assessing the department, and making the right decisions and purchases with the total concept of operations, topology, resources and plans mapped out. This is what we do.

Do You Have an RMS That Isn't Being Used as it Should?

Investment in a records management system can range from as low as $35,000 for a very small agency up to millions for a large one. So with this expenditure, why do so many agencies not use the system as it should be? Does your department utilize all of the RMS features? Worse yet, are you printing reports from the system and filing them? **STOP! TODAY!** Such a practice is a complete waste of time, energy and money. But let's talk tech and wise stewardship of the public's money.

In addition to police incident, accident, supplemental and arrest reports, your RMS may have a whole lot of features and modules that aren't being utilized as they should. Case-in-point: one recent agency we did some work for was a large Sheriff's Office with a robust mobile field reporting, CAD and RMS system. Said agency spent a lot of money on the system over six years ago. To this date, less than half the system's features which they paid for are being used. And, many of their business processes are still built around paper records management procedure. A simple cost analysis would reveal that the investment is not being spent wisely and in fact likely would reveal a loss.

So, are you using all the features of your system? Many offer quite a few features that can significantly improve operations and eliminate the need to have various records in various systems. RMS really can be the one place to manage most, if not all of your agency's records:

▶ Warrant Management
▶ Seals/Expungements
▶ Criminal Intelligence
▶ Crime Analysis
▶ Case Management
▶ Inventory Management
▶ Training Files

▶ Personnel Files
▶ Racial Profiling
▶ Court Filing
▶ Watch Orders
▶ Document/Image Attachment
▶ Link Analysis

Every RMS has a master name index, property index, vehicle index and so on. What this means is that every

inmate/defendant, agency employee and all departmental forms related to these entities, and others, can be attached to and managed in RMS. Inmate forms, property forms, personnel files and more can all be managed within one system.

So if you're going to spend the money, use what you paid for. Otherwise, yours may be on the "just another government agency" list – one not spending wisely or maximizing efficiency. And, your work life could be a lot harder than need be. Good systems make life easier. Hopefully yours is one of them- and it's being used as it should be.

Vendor Landscape

By very deliberate design, we left this portion of the booklet for last. You'll notice thus far the booklet has included information on just about everything but technology. Your business processes, compliance and performance must be in order before any technology system can be expected to improve operations. The software is not a means to an end; it is simply part of what should be a well-oiled machine; a systematic, efficient, standardized information management operation throughout the agency. Workflows, policy, protocols, quality control, and general business processes are built around managing information in a fully electronic manner. Once the foundation is built, the technology will serve to enable it all. It does no good to implement a state-of-the-art system when the practice is to print everything out, file it, and send it via fax machine.

The vendor landscape is changing with a number of new systems on the market. Selecting the right one for your agency requires planning, research, and thorough analysis of user's needs and those of the agency overall. Some systems are built with a focus on investigations and crime analysis while others may be good for reporting or other functionality. We encourage you to look beyond the traditional, legacy, big-name systems which remain over-priced, outdated and overly-complex (even if your agency is large). However, such a system may have the elements your agency requires. A system replacement project is complex and at a minimum requires:

▶ Project planning

▶ Needs assessment

▶ Developing functional requirements

▶ Developing technical requirements

▶ Interfacing and inter-agency requirements

▶ Drafting an RFP which is reasonable and specific to your department's needs

▶ A standardized and equitable vendor rating criteria and selection process

▶ Contract negotiations

▶ Vendor management

▶ Formalized information governance

▶ System implementation

▶ Training, training, training

Drafting an RFP that is thorough yet not overly-complicated which leaves room for the vendor to propose creative solutions to your agency's needs is the right approach. An RFP should not be prescriptive but rather descriptive of your needs. PRI specializes in making sure you end up with the right system, at the right price, and at the right time.

What follows is a sampling of systems and what they are known for, their relative pricing, and typical client agency size. They are listed in no particular order.

VENDOR	OVERVIEW	COST
Mark43	User-friendly, very low-level of complexity, highly reliable. Full suite of applications.	$$$
Kaseware	User-friendly, low-level of complexity, reliable. Full suite of applications.	$$
CrimeCenter	User-friendly, relatively low-level of complexity. Case management software.	$$
Tyler New World	Complex. Difficult to create custom reports. Won't provide access to data structure on back-end. Full suite of applications.	$$$$
Superion	Relatively easy to use. Full suite of applications. Sub-par support and reliability.	$$$$
Optimum Technology	User friendly. Full suite of applications. Good support.	$$$
SunRidge Systems	User friendly. Full suite of applications. Good support.	$$$
Niche	Fairly complex. Good for crime analysis. Full suite of applications.	$$$$
In-Synch	Easy to use. RMS only. High level of support.	$$

PRI is a highly specialized management consulting firm that provides criminal justice agencies records management, IT and crime data consulting, training and project management services. With core competencies in public records, UCR/NIBRS, CJIS, CAD/RMS/JMS/CMS and records operations, PRI is transforming criminal justice information management in America.

PRI