

An Audit Report on

The Accuracy of Criminal Justice Information System Data at the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Criminal Justice

December 17, 2001

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

Based on our review of the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), we believe that, overall, controls to ensure the completeness and accuracy of CJIS data are stronger today than they were five years ago. However, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) must make additional improvements to further enhance the completeness and accuracy of its portion of CJIS. In addition, the Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) must make agencywide technology improvements to correct weaknesses affecting its portion of CJIS. For example:

- Our prior CJIS audit (*An Audit Report on the Assessment of the Criminal Justice Information System*, SAO Report No. 96-058, April 1996) identified numerous control weaknesses at DPS that had an impact on the reliability of CJIS data. DPS improved controls over the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of data in its Computerized Criminal History system and has worked toward correcting past weaknesses that negatively affected CJIS data. Additional improvements in identifying incomplete and duplicate records, strengthening information technology controls, and bolstering disaster recovery planning will further improve the completeness and accuracy of CJIS data.
- Our previous audit work at TDCJ revealed that many basic controls needed to ensure the reliability of CJIS data were missing. These missing controls related to project management and the capture of statutorily required data elements. During this audit, we found that TDCJ had corrected some of the prior weaknesses. However, the Corrections Tracking System as a whole still lacks some basic controls to capture and store reliable data. TDCJ should continue working to address all requirements of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 60, and should continue to strengthen information technology controls that will improve CJIS data.

What is CJIS?

CJIS is made up of two parts: the Computerized Criminal History system maintained by the Department of Public Safety and the Corrections Tracking System maintained by the Department of Criminal Justice.

TDCJ is currently reengineering its offender management business processes. This reengineering affects systems that house CJIS data. The original completion date for this effort was August 2005. However, the final phase of reengineering has been postponed for two years and has not yet been funded.

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CJIS data is important because it is used to solve crimes and track offenders. The Criminal Justice Policy Council also relies on this data to provide population projections and other information on the criminal justice system to the Legislature.

The attachment to this letter contains additional details on the results of our audit. We provided specific recommendations to DPS and TDCJ in separate management letters sent to each agency. Both agencies agreed with our recommendations and have committed to implementing corrective measures to improve data completeness and accuracy. We would like to thank both DPS and TDCJ for their assistance and cooperation during our audit. If you have any questions, please contact Julie Ivie, Audit Manager, at (512) 936-9500.

Sincerely,

Lawrence F. Alwin, CPA
State Auditor

amh/tgc

Attachment

cc: Department of Public Safety
Chair and Members of the Board
Colonel Thomas A. Davis, Jr., Director
Department of Criminal Justice
Chair and Members of the Board
Mr. Gary L. Johnson, Executive Director
Criminal Justice Policy Council
Tony Fabelo, Ph.D., Executive Director

Section 1:

DPS Should Strengthen Controls That Ensure the Completeness and Accuracy of CCH Data

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has made technological advances in the Computerized Criminal History system (CCH), its portion of the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS). However, DPS must address additional improvements that will further improve the completeness and accuracy of CCH, and therefore CJIS, data.

CJIS Progress at DPS

Our prior CJIS audit (*An Audit Report on the Assessment of the Criminal Justice Information System*, SAO Report No. 96-058, April 1996) identified numerous control weaknesses relating to the capture and storage of CJIS data at DPS.

DPS has resolved the majority of these weaknesses and continues to improve the processes surrounding CCH data. However, disaster recovery planning at DPS continues to have general control weaknesses as previously reported.

Section 1-A:

DPS Should Implement Procedures to Better Match Court Dispositions With Arresting Events

Information in CCH is incomplete because DPS is not always able to match court dispositions with arresting events and complete the criminal history records. There are approximately 50,000 manual records and 60,000 automated

records in suspense files because DPS is unable to match arrest records with disposition records. These records do not match because:

- The county has not yet submitted arrest information.
- Specific disposition information does not match specific arrest information.
- DPS does not properly track Incident Tracking Numbers (TRNs) that are assigned to arresting events.
- There are duplicate TRNs in DPS' Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) and LiveScan system.

House Bill 776 (77th Legislature, Regular Session) charged DPS with creating a name-based, searchable database to house unmatched court disposition records. DPS must rewrite or alter its current CCH system to accomplish this task.

Section 1-B:

DPS Should Address Problems That Lead to the Assignment of Multiple State Identification Numbers to a Single Offender

CCH information is incomplete because some offenders have more than one state identification number (SID). Although each offender in the CCH system should have one unique SID, for various reasons arrest fingerprints of persons with prior criminal histories do not always match against the fingerprints already on file. This causes some offender criminal history files to be incomplete.

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When a fingerprint search erroneously fails to match an existing record and a new SID is created, it is referred to as a misrap. Currently, there are approximately 3,300 manually identified misraps.

Section 1-C:

DPS Should Strengthen Certain Controls Over Information Technology

DPS should strengthen password controls within CCH and improve the management of planning and purchasing to ensure that data is protected, users are held accountable, and expenditures are appropriate to accomplish goals. Specifically:

- DPS should strengthen the protection of user passwords for AFIS. The lack of adequate password management controls increases the risk of poor data integrity.
- DPS' information technology division should improve its overall management of the information technology (IT) planning and purchasing. A centralized planning process could help ensure the successful development and management of IT initiatives and purchases.

Section 1-D:

DPS Should Improve Disaster Recovery Planning for Its IT Systems

DPS needs to develop a comprehensive plan for disaster recovery and contingency planning and ensure that the plan encompasses all of DPS' automated systems. The lack of a realistic, testable plan could affect public and officer safety. DPS' existing plan is not based on a current business impact analysis. Therefore, DPS does not know exactly how the failure of its IT systems could affect the citizens of Texas and its own operations.

TDCJ Should Improve the Corrections Tracking System to Meet Statutory Requirements and Enhance Basic IT Controls

CJIS Progress at TDCJ

Our previous audit (*An Audit Report on the Assessment of the Criminal Justice Information System*, SAO Report No. 96-058, April 1996) identified the lack of documented plans to resolve a history of automation problems at TDCJ. These problems included the lack of an adequate System Development Life Cycle and the lack of adequate reporting of project delays for implementing the requirements of Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 60. Specifically, statutorily required information systems on probationers were not complete and were not operating as part of the Corrections Tracking System.

Some of these weakness have been addressed; however, the IT environment as a whole still lacks basic controls to capture and store reliable data.

TDCJ is still working to improve its systems to provide an automated environment that can capture and store Corrections Tracking System (CTS) data. CTS is TDCJ's portion of CJIS. TDCJ has corrected some of the previously reported findings and others are no longer relevant. However, additional agencywide technology improvements should be implemented to correct newly identified weaknesses affecting the completeness and accuracy of CJIS data.

Section 2-A:

TDCJ Should Ensure That CTS Meets Statutory Requirements

TDCJ is continuing to work toward ensuring that CTS meets all the requirements of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 60. It is important to address these requirements in the CTS and in the reengineered processes. Two tasks that are part of the effort will require cooperation between TDCJ and DPS. Specifically:

Reengineering of Business Processes at TDCJ

TDCJ is currently working on an initiative to reengineer its offender management business processes. This project began in early 1995 and is still under way. The goal of the reengineering process is to develop automated systems to support the offender management process. According to TDCJ, the reengineering effort will streamline and automate business processes at TDCJ.

The total estimated cost of the entire reengineering project is \$96 million. The reengineering project has moved into Phase III (implementation) and has cost \$11.5 million to date.

The current phase of the reengineering project addresses building, testing, and implementing systems that will support the redesigned and improved processes. Initial areas of implementation for this phase focus on parole. The rest of Phase III, which will focus on inmate applications, has not yet been funded and has been postponed for two years.

The reengineering of processes and systems is important because, once complete, the new systems will house CTS and CJIS data.

- It is critical that TDCJ comply with the Texas Code of Criminal Procedures requirement to add TRNs to CTS. When TRN information is unavailable, there is a risk that TDCJ will not be able to ensure that complete and accurate offender information is reported from the time an offender is arrested until the time the offender is released.
- TDCJ must ensure that its Community Supervision Tracking System (CSTS), which is used for offenders on probation, is expanded to include the functionality it was intended to offer. Currently, CSTS does not contain state identification numbers (SIDs) for all individuals in the system. Since notifications concerning arrests of probationers or parolees are flagged and sent out using SIDs, it is impossible for the

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notification feature to work properly until each individual in the CSTS has been assigned a SID. The notification system also is impaired because the process for removing information on individuals released from parole and probation is not working as intended.

Section 2-B:

TDCJ Should Enhance Basic Information Technology Controls

TDCJ needs to strengthen basic IT controls to provide a more effective and accountable IT environment. This is especially important considering TDCJ's ongoing reengineering effort.

The completeness and accuracy of CJIS data maintained by TDCJ will be affected by the completion of TDCJ's reengineering process. The reengineering process will ultimately replace the way TDCJ's current CTS captures and stores data.

The CTS is a collection of mainframe-based databases that house offender information. Business processes surrounding CTS are manual, and data are entered into the databases after manual processes are complete. The reengineering process will automate the manual offender management processes and capture data in Web-based relational databases.

TDCJ should:

- Prohibit system programmers from having access to the production environment. This is one of the most basic IT controls over system development, enhancement, and maintenance.
- Follow its own change management procedures for system enhancements or maintenance. Not following change management procedures increases the risk of unauthorized changes to production data, inadequate monitoring or removal of changes to production data, and inadequate documentation for future system enhancements.
- Improve the planning and rollout of AFIS/LiveScan to fully benefit from this system's features. Specifically, TDCJ does not have the telecommunications infrastructure in place to electronically transmit offender fingerprints and demographic information to DPS. In addition, TDCJ has not purchased software that would allow its mainframe computer to transmit demographic information to AFIS/LiveScan equipment. As a result, TDCJ must enter demographic information twice: once in its mainframe system and once in the AFIS/LiveScan system.
- Plan for the implementation and rollout of its newly reengineered parole system. At several district parole offices computer equipment is sitting in boxes awaiting the rollout of this system. This means that the equipment will be almost one year old before its installation. Warranties could expire before the equipment is installed. Additional expenses may be incurred for software licenses and other maintenance contracts.

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CJIS User Survey Results Indicate There Are Opportunities to Improve Overall Satisfaction With CJIS

We surveyed CJIS users to gain insight on their perception of the operational status of CJIS. Results of this survey suggest that there are a number of different opportunities to improve users' overall satisfaction with CJIS. We shared the results of the survey with DPS, TDCJ, and the Criminal Justice Policy Counsel (CJPC). CJPC will use this information in completing its portion of the CJIS audit to examine data accuracy.

The CJIS Survey

Our CJIS user survey consisted of 31 questions regarding user perceptions, access to the system, and demographics.

We sent the survey to 748 CJIS users and received 270 completed responses (a return rate of 36 percent). We received responses from 117 arresting agencies, 94 trial courts, 36 prosecutors, 16 probation offices, and 7 parole offices.

DPS reviewed the draft survey and requested additional information that would assist in identifying opportunities to improve user satisfaction.

Section 3-A:

What CJIS Users Think About the System

Completeness

We asked respondents whether critical data has been identified and captured within the CJIS system. Critical data would be different for each "user group" and would be data considered critical for that group to perform its duties. More than 63 percent of arresting agencies and 61 percent of prosecutor's offices believe that critical data is captured in CJIS. However, less than half of the courts and parole and probation departments feel that critical data has not been identified and, therefore, is not being captured.

Accuracy

More than 67 percent of arresting, parole, and prosecution agencies believe that CJIS information is accurate.

Fifteen percent of respondents identified fields or categories of information they would classify as inaccurate. Arresting agencies and probation departments most commonly identified duplicate and multiple SIDs. Arresting agencies, prosecutors, and courts identified incomplete arrest, prosecution, and disposition information as information that is commonly inaccurate. Arresting agencies and parole offices cited poor demographic information, while courts cited offense codes as commonly incorrect.

Timeliness

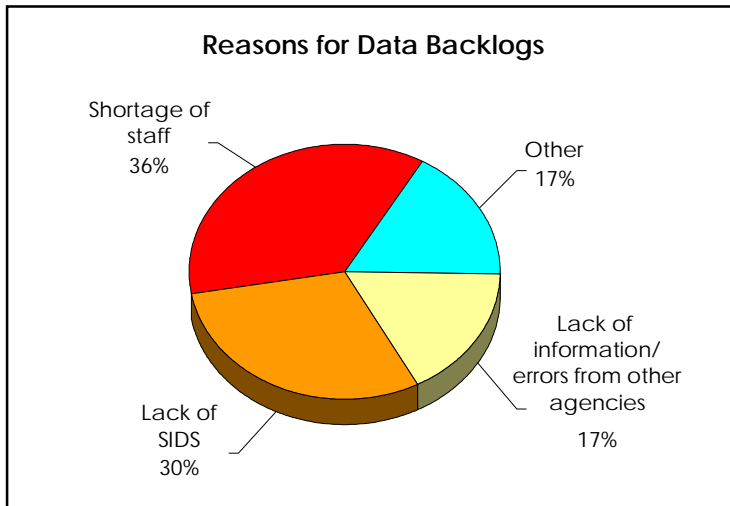
Most respondents either considered the information in CJIS to be up-to-date or did not know if it was up-to-date. Thirty-six percent of prosecutors who responded did not consider CJIS information to be up-to-date.

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Eight percent of arresting agencies reported that they have a backlog of data that needs to be entered into CJIS. More than 11 percent of probation departments, prosecutors, and courts also reported that they have backlogs. As Figure 1 shows,

missing SIDs and staff shortages were the most common reasons cited for backlogs.

Figure 1



Source: Survey of CJIS users performed by the State Auditor's Office.

Electronic Reporting

When asked what prevented them from moving forward with electronic reporting provided by DPS, 17 percent of arresting agencies cited lack of funding as the primary barrier. More than 50 percent of all respondents reported that their agencies would consider using an Internet-based data entry system.

Section 3-B:

CJIS Enhancements Recommended By Survey Respondents

Survey responses showed that:

- Arresting agencies commonly reported increased access and complete reporting of CJIS data is needed.
- Parole offices suggested access to the system, training, and implementation of TDCJ's planned reengineering upgrades would add the most value.
- Probation departments and prosecutors commonly identified a need for better reporting on the part of participating agencies.
- Courts and court clerks cited a need to enhance CJIS training.

Summary of Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to audit the accuracy of the Criminal Justice Information System's data. We reviewed controls over completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of the Criminal Justice Information System data at both the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Criminal Justice. We also followed up on previous State Auditor's Office recommendations and assessed new risks as they were identified. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 60, requires that the State Auditor's Office conduct this audit in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Policy Council.

The State Auditor's Office portion of the audit involved examining the Criminal Justice Information System's business process control structure and identifying strengths and weaknesses. The Criminal Justice Policy Council will use this information to test the accuracy of data within the Criminal Justice Information System. The Criminal Justice Policy Council began its portion of the audit in October 2001.

Our work was performed between April and September 2001. This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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