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ILLINOIS  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
INFORMATION AUTHORITY

# On Good Authority

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*On Good Authority* is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice program evaluation. This issue summarizes the Authority's Criminal Justice Plan for the State of Illinois. The full plan can be downloaded or ordered from the Authority's website at [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us), or by contacting the Research and Analysis Unit.

The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice in Illinois. The basic functions of the Authority are criminal justice research, federal and state grants administration, and information systems development and support.

For more information, or for copies of this or other publications, contact the Authority at (312) 793-8550, or visit our website at [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us).

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## Authority adopts state criminal justice plan

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In 1999, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority began a new comprehensive planning process to help guide the use of the state's limited resources in the areas of program development, research and evaluation, legislative and policy initiatives, and the administration of federal grant funds. The process resulted in the *Criminal Justice Plan for the State of Illinois*, which was unanimously accepted by the Authority at its June 1, 2001, meeting.

The ongoing planning process is guided by research, data collection, professional input, and consultation. A two-day planning assembly was held in June 2000. Nearly 150 policymakers, service providers, researchers, private citizens, and government officials participated in the assembly. Following the assembly, six advisory committees were formed: Drug and Violent Crime, Juvenile Crime, Offender Services, Victims of Crime, Community Capacity Building, and Information Systems and Technology. These committees were convened several times to refine issues and develop the strategies articulated in the plan.

The *Criminal Justice Plan* incorporates research material gathered during the planning process and identifies 21 priority issues. It also sets goals and objectives for each issue, and recommends more than 200 specific action steps to address them.

The issues identified during the planning process point to critical needs in five overarching areas: information, collaboration, the utilization of resources, services, and accountability.

### INFORMATION

Three types of information needs in Illinois were viewed as paramount in the plan. First, basic information about offenders, victims, and reported crimes is not readily available. Second, there is a lack of meaningful information describing the needs of offenders, victims, and those who work with them in the criminal justice system. Finally, information systems are not integrated at the state level; consequently, it is impossible to effectively track offenders between the arrest, charging, court disposition, and sentencing stages. The plan identifies the following information-related issues:

#### 1. The state lacks critical information about juvenile offenders and the juvenile justice system.

Efforts to coordinate juvenile justice services and to make informed decisions regarding at-risk youth and alleged delinquent youth are impeded by the absence of case-level data and a lack of information sharing between agencies. Sharing of information would allow treatment providers to more efficiently determine the level and type of services needed by avoiding redundancy of service and conflicts in treatment approaches. It also would keep multiple agencies serving a single juvenile from having to collect the same information, and would help prevent children from falling through the gaps in service delivery systems.

The *Criminal Justice Plan* calls for the gathering of high quality data about juvenile offenders to improve decision-making at the individual and policy

level. The plan recommends the creation of a centralized and integrated reporting system, which would link juvenile justice agencies, schools, and treatment providers.

**2. The state lacks sufficient information on the needs of victims and the impact of justice system efforts.**

There is a critical need to improve information about crime victims and their victimization experience. The plan recommends that enhancements be made to the Illinois State Police's uniform crime reporting (UCR) program to capture more victim and incident information. It also calls for the creation of a statewide crime victimization survey, and the collection and sharing of information about criminal case outcomes.

**3. The community needs information to promote mobilization.**

The plan recommends that information examining community capacity building be compiled and disseminated to communities. This compilation of materials would include a directory of Illinois initiatives, as well as national and international efforts. The criminal justice system should be responsible for gathering and distributing information to communities so that they understand issues and problems relevant to them.

**4. The state lacks a coordinated criminal justice information-sharing scheme.**

While there are shared systems in Illinois, including a statewide criminal history database, these systems are not significantly integrated with the courts, prosecution, or law enforcement. The result is that criminal justice information is fragmented and frequently inaccurate. The plan calls for Illinois to create an integrated statewide justice information network to provide accurate, timely, and easily accessible information.

## COLLABORATION

There is wide recognition that collaborative planning is necessary to effectively deal with offender and victim needs. Better collaboration must take place

within the justice system itself, as well as with community residents and service providers. The plan identifies the following collaboration issues:

**1. The criminal justice system must recognize the importance of collaboration and information sharing in reducing drug and violent crime.**

The state needs to recognize the critical role collaboration and information sharing play in law enforcement and other efforts to combat drug and violent crime. The *Criminal Justice Plan* recommends increased communication and collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the most serious offenders are identified and appropriately incarcerated or monitored.

**2. The state should decentralize funding for juvenile justice projects and encourage collaboration.**

Local agencies should pool their resources so programs are as effective as possible and get the most benefit from funding sources. The plan calls for state agencies to more effectively coordinate their programming efforts in the areas of criminal and juvenile justice, crime prevention, and treatment services.

**3. Criminal justice agencies must communicate more regularly and expand joint planning and implementation efforts.**

All criminal justice entities need to act as part of a system, rethinking the role each plays and developing strategies to best effect needed change and maximize limited resources. The plan calls for building effective partnerships among stakeholders to create a dialogue involving criminal justice professionals, service providers, researchers, community leaders, and members of the faith and medical communities.

**4. Criminal justice system personnel and victim service providers can improve their response to victims through collaboration.**

Collaboration allows limited resources to be used more effectively by minimizing duplicate efforts. Those in

leadership positions must make the commitment to improving the system's response to victims and must reinforce this priority through their protocols, actions, and words.

**5. The state needs to challenge the traditional thinking about how the criminal justice system functions and include the community as a key stakeholder.**

There is a need to utilize training and technical assistance to promote the philosophy of community capacity building. The availability of technical assistance and planning and assessment tools would help communities identify local problems, assess capacity, and evaluate the impact of solutions. The plan recommends educating stakeholders on their ability and responsibility to foster community capacity building.

## UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES

The state must make more effective use of personnel and programs. Strategies should be empirically based and reflect sound theoretical underpinnings. Program evaluation findings need to be integrated more fully into new program development efforts, and research results must be synthesized for key decision-makers. The plan identifies the following resource utilization issues:

**1. The criminal justice system must recognize the different needs and resources of the various regions of the state.**

The state must increase the ability of rural jurisdictions to effectively address substance abuse and violence. Toward this end, the plan calls for the state to ensure that appropriate investigatory, court, correctional and treatment services are available throughout Illinois.

**2. The state needs more effective policies and programs to identify and deal with drug and violent crime offenders.**

The plan recommends that the state increase the ability of the criminal justice system to effectively identify and verify the risks and needs of drug and violent

crime offenders, and to enhance treatment capacity.

**The quality of services provided to victims by criminal justice personnel and victim service providers can be improved through training.**

Training is necessary for all persons in the criminal justice system and for victim service providers. Training for all entities should incorporate a focus on victims in the training curriculum. Additionally, multidisciplinary training for criminal justice professionals should be developed to help them understand each other's roles and responsibilities as they pertain to victims.

**4. The state must expand its use of forensic science technology.**

The state faces an ongoing challenge to provide assistance in the collection and analysis of physical evidence. Partnerships between law enforcement agencies need to be continued and augmented to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the area of forensic science.

One of the most pressing issues in forensic science is the advancement of DNA technology. Backlogs in the state crime laboratories have led to an imbalance in the administration of justice.

There also is a shortage of qualified forensic computer labs and examiners, and local jurisdictions often lack the knowledge and expertise necessary to handle technology-related crimes. The *Criminal Justice Plan* calls for developing a state-level capability to handle digital evidence collection and analysis.

## SERVICES

Significant service needs have been identified in three principal areas: adult offender treatment, crime victims, and juveniles. Treatment services for drug offenders, sex offenders and domestic violence offenders must be strengthened. The system is increasingly identifying offenders with multiple service needs, including dual mental health diagnoses, physical health problems and other significant issues. The plan identifies the following service-related issues:

**1. The state must promote the importance of identifying and responding to risk factors as a delinquency prevention measure.**

It is extremely important that juvenile justice agencies be made aware of what risk factors are associated with delinquency and other subsequent problems, and how to spot them. It is also important for school personnel, health care workers, and others who deal with youth to be able to identify these problems and intervene prior to criminal justice system involvement. In addition to traditional academic courses, schools need to provide students with character development, mediation skills, parenting skills (both to teens and to their parents), anti-gang programs, and other programs that enhance protective factors serving to mitigate risk.

**2. The state's handling of juveniles with mental health needs must be improved.**

Youth with mental health and other special needs often come into the juvenile justice system because there is nowhere else for them to go, even though they would be better served by other systems. Advisory committee members felt that decisions should be made based on which system is best equipped to help the youth rather than which system is the most convenient. The plan calls for the state to serve juveniles with mental health and other special needs in the most appropriate system given their specific needs. Further, the state should seek alternative treatment approaches for youths with special needs, centering treatment around the family whenever possible.

**3. The state must encourage collaborative and multidisciplinary responses to troubled youth.**

The plan identifies a need to change and improve a fragmented service delivery system for juveniles. Currently, different agencies respond to various components of a youth's problem behavior or delinquency without sufficient coordination in the development of a treatment plan or in the actual delivery of services. Advisory committee members felt that a continuum of services would be

more cost-effective than a piecemeal approach, and it would ensure fewer gaps in services and fewer turf battles between agencies. The *Criminal Justice Plan* calls for partnerships between agencies that deal with juveniles, including criminal justice, education, mental health, social services, faith-based institutions, and neighborhood groups. The state should support, encourage, and market multidisciplinary responses by juvenile agencies and the pooling of resources. The juvenile justice process should include greater community involvement, and the state should support and encourage community input on program planning and allocation of local resources.

**4. The state needs a continuum of offender services.**

Recidivism for adult offenders can, in part, be linked to low levels of education, lack of work experience and employment opportunities, substance abuse, and a number of other dysfunctions that make an incident-free adjustment to the community difficult. Current service delivery programs for offenders are fragmented. The criminal justice system partner agencies must work with service and treatment providers to build a continuum of services. The plan calls for Illinois to close the gap between offender needs and available services. A continuum of interventions must be available to ensure that all components of the criminal justice system maximize opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.

**5. The state must minimize the impact of victimization by providing basic services to all victims of crime.**

A number of barriers to services to victims were identified, including the lack of childcare services for children of victims receiving services; gender differences between victim and service providers for crimes of a sensitive nature; a lack of housing options for domestic violence victims; and familiarity of residents in rural areas and the lack of transportation in these areas. The plan

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calls for the state to strengthen and expand basic services to victims of crime, and to develop additional services to minimize the impact of victimization. It also calls for action to ensure that the basic service needs of victims of crime are being met. The plan recommends that the most effective services be identified and strengthened. Priorities for specialized services should be developed only after basic services are fully sufficient. The plan suggests that nontraditional resources be identified to augment existing ones. The plan also urges funding agencies to work together to identify and overcome duplication of efforts and gaps in services.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability should be a central principle in the justice system. The plan identifies the following accountability issues:

1. *The Illinois criminal justice system should be held more accountable to crime victims.*

The *Criminal Justice Plan* calls for the criminal justice system to be held more accountable to crime victims and the community at large. It identifies the need to collect data related to decision-making at both the law enforcement and prosecution levels, and for the development of a strategy to ensure victims are informed of available services and educated about their rights. There also is a need to educate the public and criminal justice professionals about victims' rights and the availability of victim services. Finally, the plan calls for exploring the establishment of a system of recourse for victims who feel their rights have been violated.

2. *The criminal justice system must ensure that offenders are held accountable for their actions.*

The plan recommends that the state ensure the most serious offenders can be identified, apprehended, prosecuted, and incarcerated or monitored appropriately.

3. *Stakeholders in the state criminal justice system must be committed to developing partnerships with the community.*

Criminal justice agencies need to recognize the community as a critical partner in identifying problems and developing solutions related to public safety. Nontraditional partnerships should be formed with groups such as residents, community groups, faith leaders, schools, social service providers, and the media. These entities should become permanent partners in the actions, policies, and philosophies of the criminal justice system.

The *Criminal Justice Plan* recommends that the Authority assume a leadership role in promoting the philosophy of community capacity building and establish goals addressing it. Further, criminal justice agencies should be encouraged to develop organizational philosophies that include the community as a stakeholder. ♦



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