

Month Day, 2009

«Name»

«Title»

«Address»

Dear «Salutation»:

For several years the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has supported a statistical series – State Court Processing Statistics (SCPS) – describing the characteristics of felony defendants and the processing of their cases by State courts in the nation’s largest jurisdictions. This effort, with the cooperation of many courts and other criminal justice officials, has provided high quality data of potential widespread benefit to a vast array of criminal justice planners and decision makers. BJS also publishes a variety of reports with the SCPS data.

As has been done in even-numbered years since 1988, data collection for the SCPS data series 2009-2010 begins this year. A sample of felony defendants from 40 counties are tracked for up to one year. These counties are selected to provide a representative cross-section of the most populous jurisdictions in the nation, and your county has been identified as a key part of this national sample. I extend our appreciation for your assistance in this important study.

Information to be collected on these defendants will include demographic characteristics, criminal justice status, prior arrests and convictions, conditions of pretrial release and detention, pretrial re-arrests, court appearance record, adjudication outcome, and sentencing. Reporting of data will be either through a two-page manual form or in an electronic format from your own automated information system. We will provide training, a *User Guide*, and an electronic list of items, and other assistance as needed.

All information that identifies individual defendants will be kept confidential in accordance with the provisions of section 812 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act of 1968 as amended (42 U.S.C. 3789g). The information pertaining to individuals that you provide will not be divulged in identifiable form to anyone other than the staff and consultants of SCPS.

Although participation in this study is voluntary, the response of your «Court» is very important to this project, and I hope you and your staff will agree to assist us. We estimate that it should take your staff about 60 minutes on average to manually complete each SCPS data collection form and about 15 hours to produce programs capable of transferring SCPS data files in an automated format. It should take an estimated 120 minutes to complete an additional spreadsheet that assesses the levels of overall automation of your pretrial and court data. In compliance with the Paper Work Reduction Act, we weighed the resources required to collect these data against the critical information that will be generated with your participation. This information has been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (please see OMB control number XXX on the data collection forms).

Your cooperation in this program is extremely important in enabling us to compile an accurate description of how cases involving a felony offense are processed in our nation’s courts. The SCPS series for 2009 - 2010 will not be possible without your jurisdiction’s participation. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Cohen

Statistician
Bureau of Justice Statistics